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Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine Issue 99 (December 2005)

KING KONG

A GOOD MOVIE-BASED GAME? BELIEVE IT!
EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON AND DEMO INSIDE

METAL GEAR SOLID 4 FOR THE PS3
SNAKE IS BACK! MORE PS3 GOODIES INSIDE!

GTA: LIBERTY CITY STORIES REVIEWED!

+

30 MORE PSP AND PS2 GAMES RATED

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Now Everyone Can Be Gretzky.
EVERYONE 10+
E
10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence
ONLINE
BROADBAND ONLY
NHL
NHLPA
99
PlayStation 2

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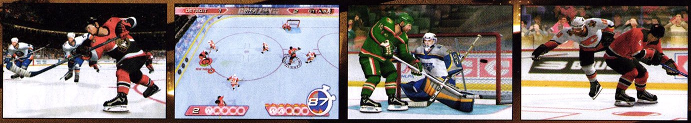

Wish you could play like Wayne? Well, here's your chance. Every NHL franchise, all 27 AHL teams and bonuses that reward your squad for its team chemistry. Plus, the new Wayne vs. Wayne mode, which lets you earn "99 Time" by executing big hits and combos, earning you a chance to use Wayne on the ultimate power play. Now you won't just play Gretzky, you'll become Gretzky.

GRETZKY NHL 06

www.gretzkynhl06.com

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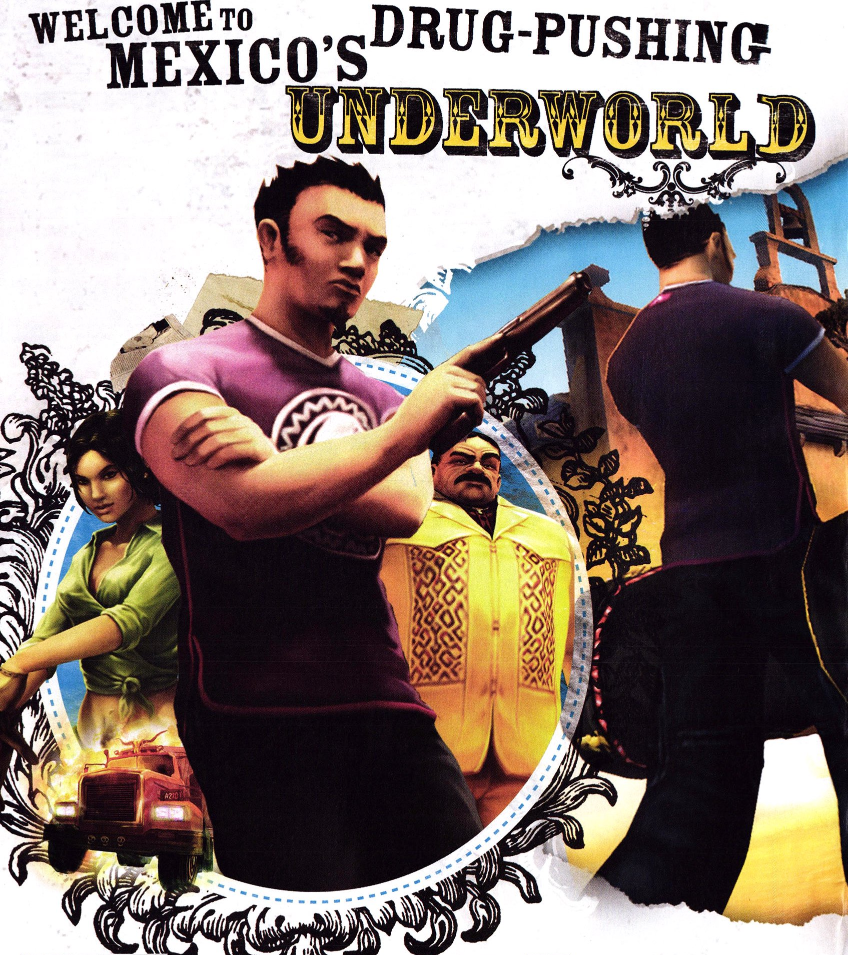
WELCOME TO MEXICO'S DRUG-PUSHING UNDERWORLD

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- Blood and Gore
- Intense Violence
- Language
- Suggestive Themes
- Use of Drugs

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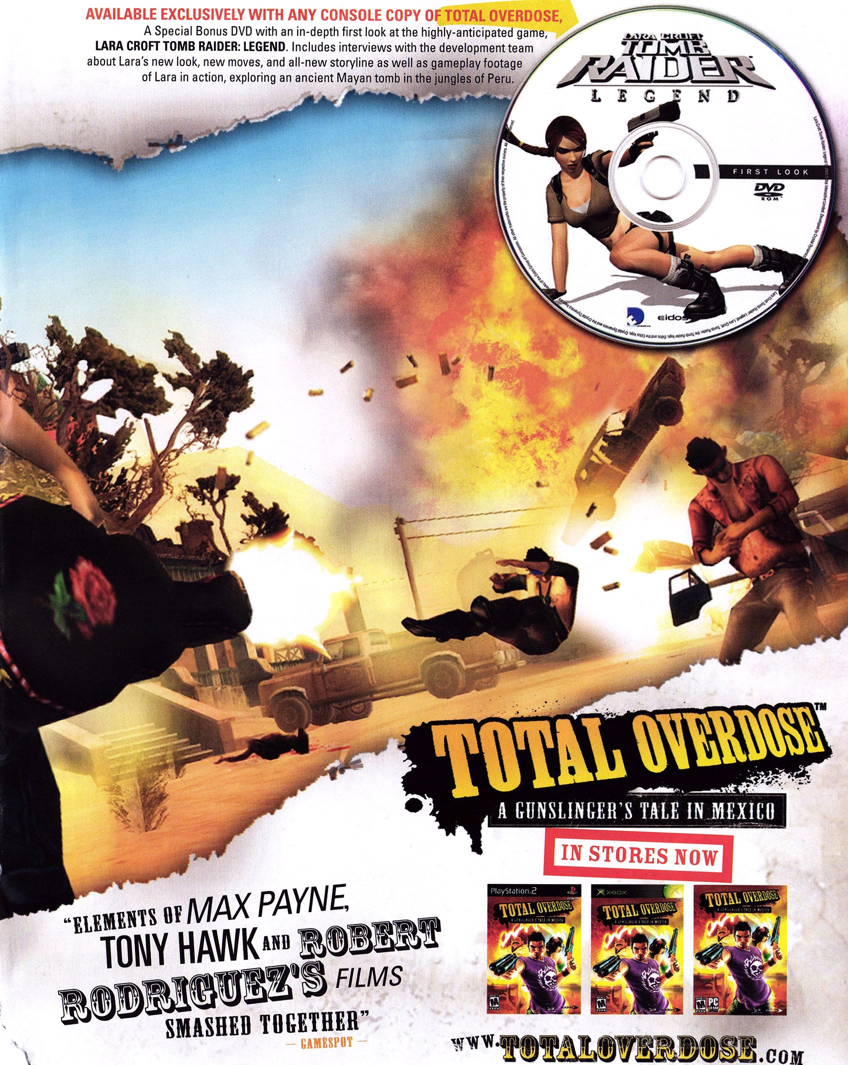
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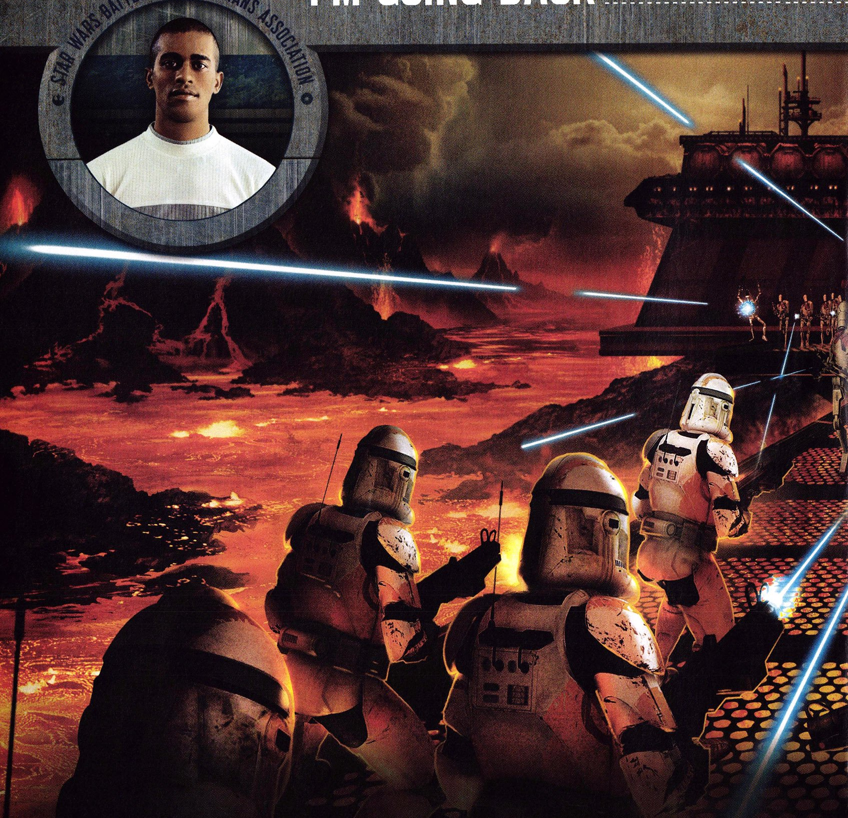
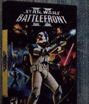

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT VETERANS ASSOCIATION



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Violence
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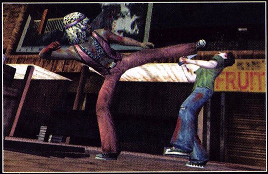

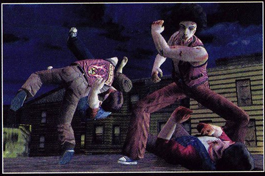

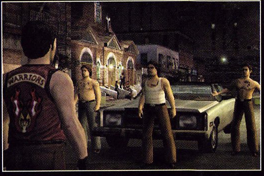

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Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Drugs and Alcohol

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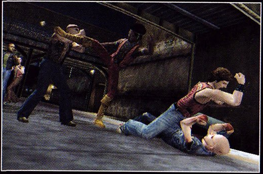

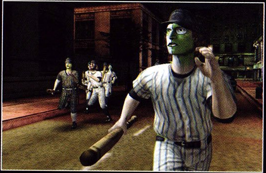

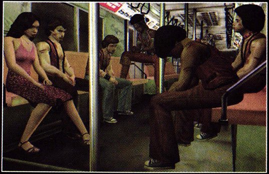

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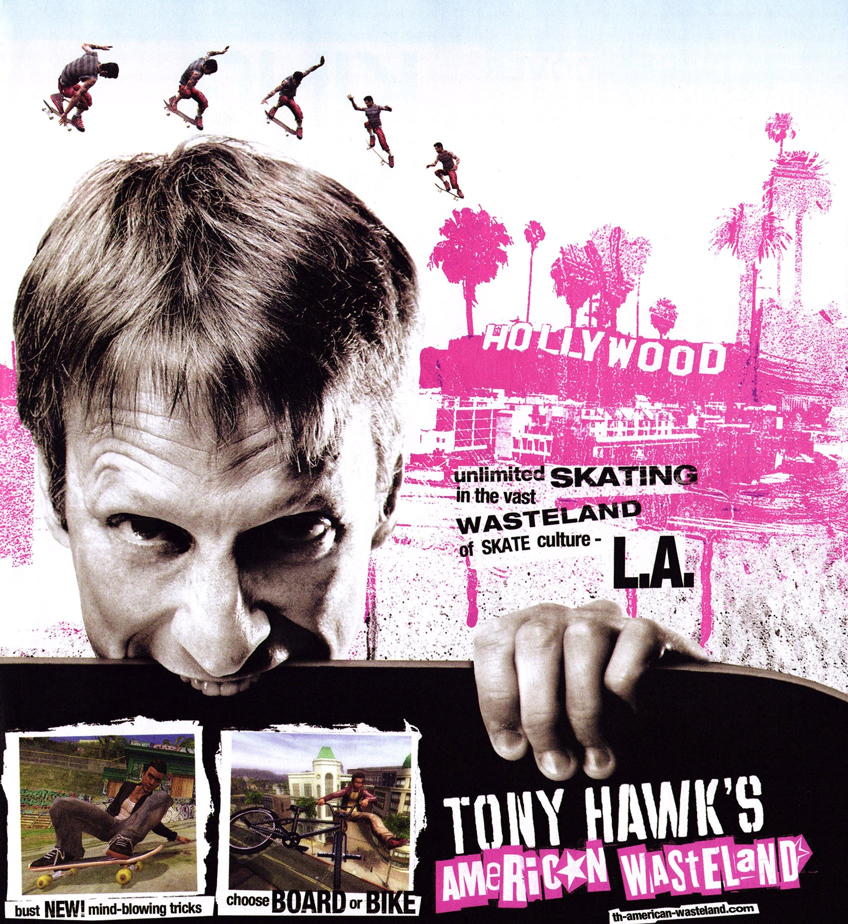
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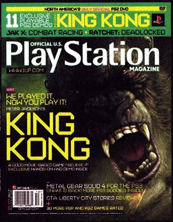
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+ 30 MORE PSP AND PS2 GAMES RATED

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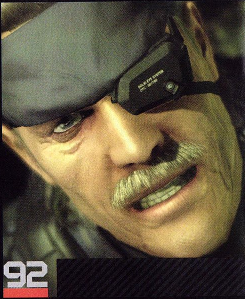

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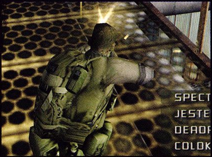

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HOT PREVIEWS

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King Kong is so huge that the magazine couldn't hold everything we had to say—for our interview with Peter Jackson, the full conversation with Michel Ancel, gameplay video, and a history of big monkeys onscreen, go here now. This s*** is bananas!

CONSOLEWAR.1UP.COM

The Xbox 360 comes out this month. Is Microsoft's choice to launch so far ahead of the PS3 a good one? Did Sony make the right call in waiting? Is the 360's hardware a serious threat to Sony's console domination? Stop by for expert opinions on whose machine will reign supreme.

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As the veteran editor on *OPM*, Joe knows a lot about games. But Joe knows a lot about other things, too, including music, movies, and fun Internet resources to consult. To see what's occupying his mind today, stop by—and say hi while you're there.

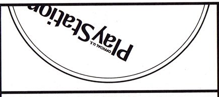
PS2.1UP.COM

The annual deluge of games is cascading down upon gamers. Don't get caught up in the floodwaters of marketing-speak—come to 1UP to get honest reviews from editors you trust. We would never lie to you, because we care about you as much as we do our mothers. (Sorry, Mom!)

ON THE DVD

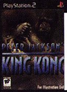
TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

The demo disc is always a wonderful thing, but for the second month in a row, it's rocking you extra hardcore. When we need that extra push over the cliff, you know what we do? Put it up to 11.



PLAY IT

THAT'S NOT ALL!
Also on the disc for your playing pleasure are *Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood*, *Shining Force Neo*, and *Total Overdose*.



PJ'S KING KONG

Dude, you get to play as a 50-foot-tall ape who cracks the jaws of T-Rexes in half with his bare hands and you're here *reading* about it?

DRAGON QUEST VIII

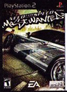
OK, given that this is one of the hugest RPGs to appear on the PS2 ever, this is just a tiny smidgen of the fun you will find. Enjoy.

JAK X

OK, we admit it—this game is so much better than we thought it could be. Check it out and then read the review on page 120.

RATCHET: DEADLOCKED

Ratchet has bigger guns now, and he's not afraid to use them. And you shouldn't be either. Because they're really pretty fun—try it for yourself.



NFS: MOST WANTED

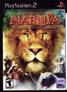
If you run around quoting Maverick all the time, then all your friends would probably be thrilled if you just shut up and played this demo.

KARAOKE REV. PARTY

Aspiring *American Idol* contestants and closeted rock stars take note: From Beyoncé to Wild Cherry, this demo has got you covered.

DDR EXTREME 2

Single player, versus, double-mat—by our expert medical opinion, there are at least five pounds of weight loss packed into this demo.



CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

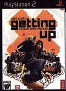
Lions and—OK, no tigers or bears, but there are fauns and wolves and stuff. But it's up to you to decide whether there's an "Oh, my."

WATCH IT

AND DON'T MISS
more videos for *Jak X* and *Magna Carta: Tears of Blood*, plus downloadable saves for *God of War* and *Lego Star Wars*!

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

Watch the world of Marvel unfold before your eyes as you view this trailer illustrating the exploits of Ultimate Spidey and Ultimate Venom.



MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP

A bunch of politicians are getting freaked out that this game lets you vandalize. Freak them out even more by watching the video.

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Demo Disc Producers
Gary Barth, Cori Lucas, Manuel Sousa, Chris Tan
Marketing Team
Steve Williams, Eric Lempel, Jesse Caid
Executive Producer
Andrew House
Format Q&A
Sam Bradley, Edward Toomy
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Eric Ippolito

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3D Artists Jason Robinson, Philip Williamson, David Hayes
Producer Jessi Harrison
President Katherine Williams
Technical Director Tim Edwards

SPECIAL THANKS
Maimoona Block, Kirsten Costello, Christine DeNezza, Tom Gillan, Gerald Martin, Sean Thomas, Jim Williams

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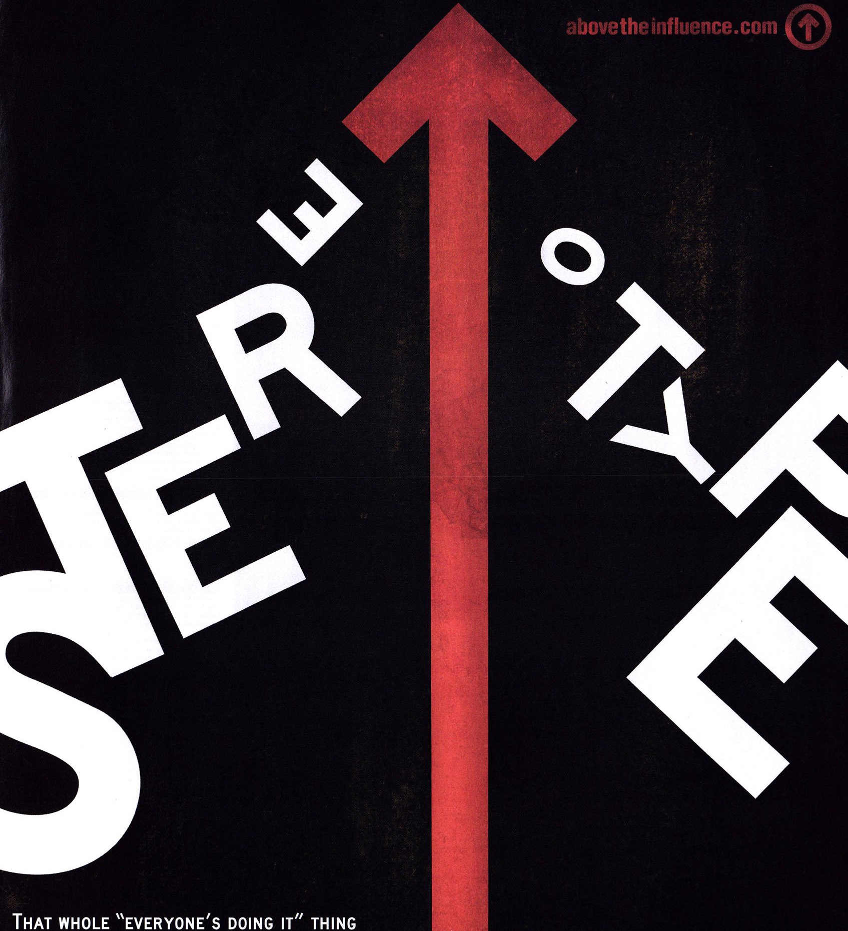

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THE FUTURE'S SO BRIGHT

TOKYO GAME SHOW AS CRYSTAL BALL

Scooter and I returned from our rollicking adventures at the Tokyo Game Show, and it was a blast. While we didn't get hands-on time with the PS3 as we had hoped, we did see a lot to make us giddy as schoolboys.

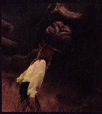
But first I have to tell you about the bullet train (the Shinkansen line). This puppy can reach speeds of up to 200 mph, and when you're in it you can't tell you're going so fast. I had the chance to ride in one—what took over two and a half hours by bus, the bullet train did in about 30 minutes. I hope this technological wonder finds its way to the U.S. someday.

But back to TGS: Yes, *MGS4* is the real deal, the PS3 titles showcased (on the video wall) looked amazing, and the PSP's future appears brighter than ever (as we cross our fingers in hopes everything we saw makes it over here). Check out our extensive show coverage beginning on page 28. (By the way, no Godzilla sightings, but for some truly monstrous fun, you must read Dana's excellent *King Kong* feature and then play the demo on this month's DVD. You must. I demand it.) « *Tom Byron*

THE OPM FAMILY

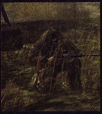
MISSION STATEMENT

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine is America's No. 1 authority on all things PlayStation. *OPM*'s expert editors and writers are the best in the business, presenting the most important PlayStation news, previews, and reviews in a professional, enthusiastic, and honest manner, and our in-depth features and interviews are second to none. While *OPM* editorial is completely independent of Sony, the magazine's "official" status allows it to include the exclusive monthly DVD packed with playable demos and videos of the hottest PlayStation games around. *OPM* provides its readers with a fun, informative—and beautifully designed—package each and every month, because, after all, fun is what PlayStation gaming is all about.



DANA JONGEWAARD

is either A) a little *too* immersed into *King Kong*, B) overwhelmed by the monkey on her back that is the torrential downpour of fall review games, or C) shocked to learn that she somehow got signed up for a really freaky Internet dating service.



JOE RYBICKI

is damn excited for *SOCOM 3* to launch so that he can get into some massive 32-player games with you all. If you look, you'll see him online as "joePM." Actually, on second thought, you probably won't see him at all.

5-4
GAME 2005
迷子センター
Lost Child

THIERRY NGUYEN

might have gone to the Land of the Rising Sun, but he spent most of his time in the room for lost children. While everyone else went out on the town, Scooter mostly saw a dinky TV hooked up to a freaking Famicom.

NOW LOADING...

GIANCARLO VARANINI

remembers when he and his brother Julian used to play *Street Fighter II* religiously when it first came out. Now, after playing *Capcom Collection*, he thinks it's time to just buy the arcade machine already—stupid loading times.

LOGAN PARR

has finally jacked into the Matrix—well, the game at least—and is now wondering, just how far does the rabbit hole go? Having watched him try and re-create some of Neo's moves in real life, we have but one thing to say: Kids, don't try this at home.

RYAN VULK

goes rawr rawr like a dungeon dragon. Recently he has gone back to visit the past by listening to some old-school beats from A Tribe Called Quest. "Here we go yo, here we go yo, so whatsa, whatsa, what's the scenario...."

ALEJANDRO CHAVETTA

is organizing what will be the world's first killer-dog show. The event will consist of dogs chasing Marin squirrels and coiffed chumps in a controlled environment. He hopes it will generate enough revenue to buy him a white PSP.

JOHN SCALZI

has opinions about games, and he has opinions about movies, but he also has opinions about things that don't involve a TV screen—for example, what exactly the proper care and feeding of clones entails. Check it out at www.scalzi.com/whatever/.

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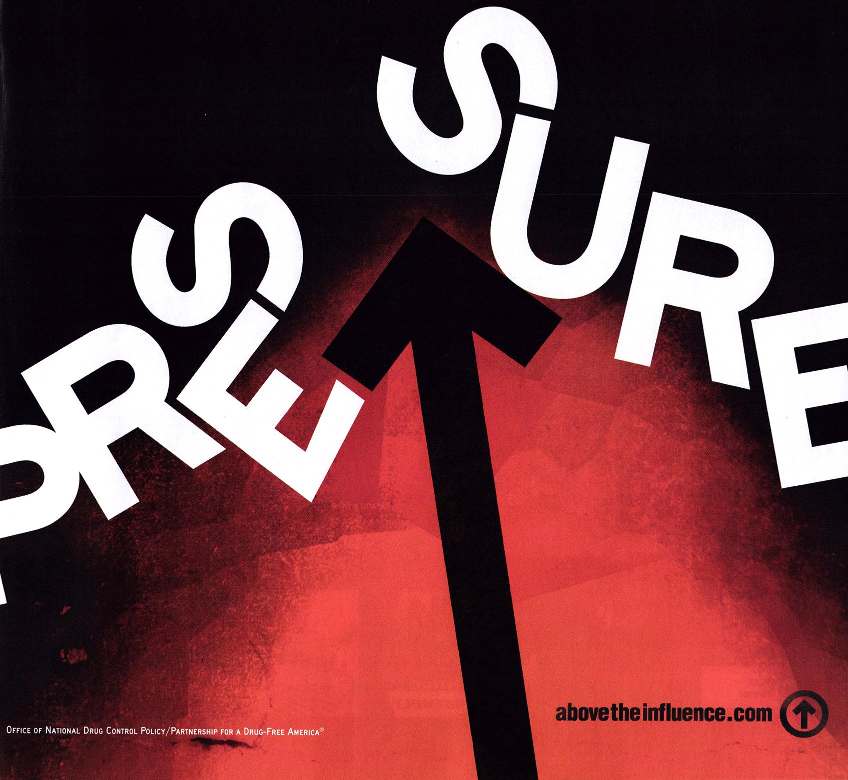

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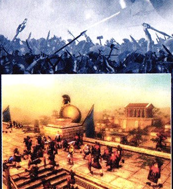

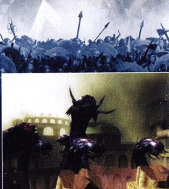

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PlayStation 2

the CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

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INPUT

HIT US WITH YOUR BEST SHOT

LETTER OF THE MONTH

TAKING A HIT FOR THE HITS

Do you know if there are any plans to make *Mercenaries* a Greatest Hits title in the near future? I used to own the game, but sold it, and now regret it. It was a really fun game. I wouldn't mind buying it back, but I have this bad luck with buying older titles. I have a tendency to buy them right before they become greatest hits, so I end up paying full price for something I could have gotten for $20 if I had just waited a few weeks. I did this about a month ago with *Hot Shots Golf Fore!* I paid the full $40, then two weeks later it became a Greatest Hits title; I was so mad. So I was just wondering if maybe I should wait before I buy back *Mercenaries*.

Lonewolf
Via e-mail

Wow. Remind us not to ask you for advice on stocks. But you're actually in luck, sort of. While LucasArts has not announced *Mercenaries* as a greatest hit quite yet, we did a quick scan using something we call the Internet and found *Mercenaries* for a mere $10 on eBay, $26.99 (preplayed) on EBgames.com, and new at Best Buy for a mere $19.99! Looks like the Lonewolf curse is at an end.

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PSP LOVIN'/VIGGO HATIN'

So, my wife finally let me buy a PSP a few months ago, and despite the constant stream of negativity and disappointment that spews from the message boards and mags, I'm very happy with it. Maybe it's because I've always held on to the belief that the best is yet to come: The Web browser, for instance, is great, but we had to wait for it.

I'll admit that there haven't been any world-stopping games yet, key word: yet. October, however, seems poised to change all of that, but you wouldn't know that from reading *OPM*, would you? On page 34 of the November issue, the article titled "More PSP in Your Future" (sounds positive, right?) ends with the depressing jibe, "...you have to keep people busy with something if there aren't any games."

In the same issue, the review on page 121 for *Marvel Nemesis* begins with, "It's beyond cliché to point out that the PSP doesn't have any good games...." It's worthwhile to note that three out of the six PSP games reviewed in that same issue received a score of four or better. Also noteworthy is the fact that the October calendar (in the November issue) makes absolutely no mention of any new PSP game releases (yet points out that Oct. 20 is Viggo Mortensen's birthday). A total

GAMERS ARE TALKING ABOUT

STRAIGHT FROM THE OPM MESSAGE BOARDS

GTA TO THE RESCUE

It seems all this talk of PSP not having great games may have to be put on hold, at least temporarily. The forum folks are particularly stoked about *GTA: Liberty City Stories* and its multiplayer modes. **Yakityyakblah** opens with the excited header "*GTA: LCS*...Real multiplayer!!" and starts with, "This news sure as hell brightened my day. Seven players with a variety of modes playing on one of the three islands with up to 60 skins! Damn PSP, you look good."

Black_13 is excited, too, but wants more, "Yeah, just read about it. This is the type of multiplayer I was talking about. *GTA* could easily be turned into a great multiplayer game. It is sad that it's not online, but hey, [PSP multiplayer] is still impressive."

"This is by far going to be the killer app for the PSP this year. If this doesn't sell PSPs, I don't know what will," **bizsumpark182** predicts, but then throws in this little jab, "...*Guy Game* portable, maybe?"

Check out our review of *GTA: LCS* on page 134 for the full scoop.

GRAMPA SNAKE

There was considerable speculation about *MGS4*'s unveiling at the Tokyo Game Show (see our full report on page 92). **Black_13** started things off with the post entitled "*MGS4* First Screens," in which he says, "The wait is no longer. First *MGS4* screens have been revealed. It still remains to be known who exactly this character is. Big Boss? Solid Snake? Or maybe even Solidus? Kojima is at it again. He wants to mess with our minds. Let all the speculation begin.... And, of course, it couldn't be *MGS4* without Snake's old buddy Otacon. Well then, it sure looks damn good."

MEGAGAMERopm wonders, "From Ocaton's picture, it looks like it takes place 20 or 30 years after *MGS2*.

Dituni sounds a cynical note: "Hahahahah. Snake with a mustache, what is going on!!! Plus, [in] the second photo, it looks like he is trying to pass a brick!!! Ohhh, I feel so bad that my initial reaction was not a good one. Hahahahaha."

The irrepressible **ohJTBehaaave** couldn't resist this passing comment, "Who is that...Snake's pirate grandfather?" but closes with a complimenting pun, "Those pics look pretty solid, though."

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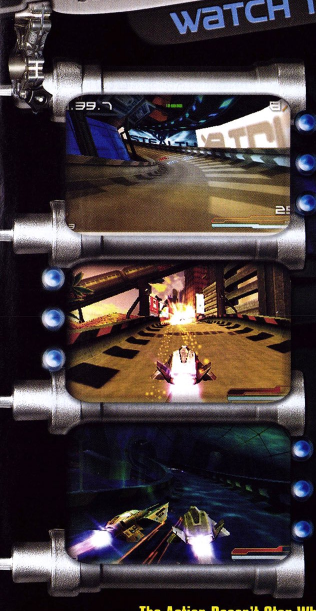

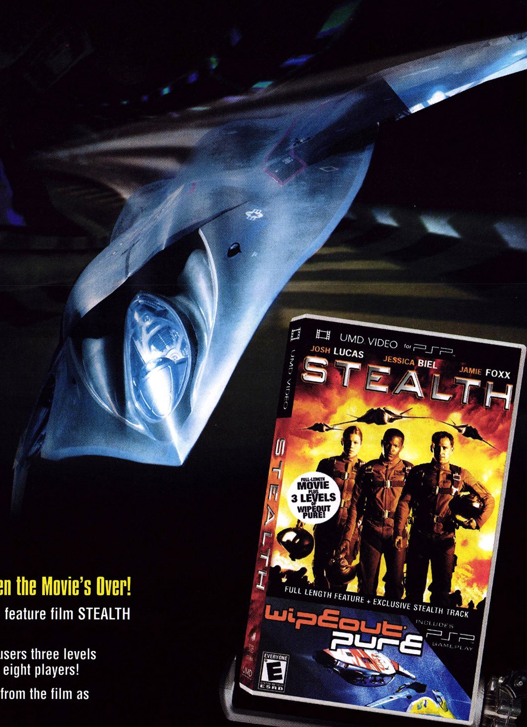
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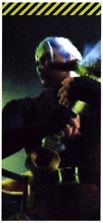

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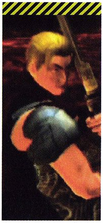

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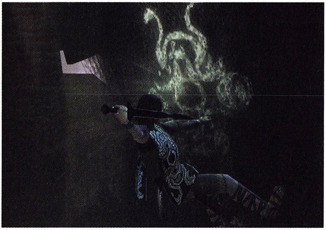

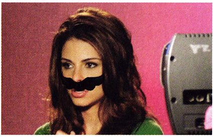

CORRECTION

Last month we mistakenly labeled a picture as Mario Menounos; it was actually Maria Menounos. Mario Menounos is pictured at left—we always get them mixed up.

lack of coverage despite the October release of some very good games like *PoPoLoCrois* (the first true RPG for PSP, and it didn't even get a review >.<), *X-Men Legends II*, and *GTA: Liberty City Stories*. I realize that it's currently "cool" to PSP-bash, but please don't sacrifice proper game coverage.

Ryan
Minneapolis, MN

Wait, you have a problem with Viggo Mortensen, the true heir to Isildur?!

You do make excellent points. Honestly, we don't think it's cool to PSP-bash, as evidenced by some recent review scores (see our exclusive *GTA* review, page 134) and the amazing games we saw at the Tokyo Game Show that we hope make it to these shores (see "PSPlenty," page 82). We were reacting to the dearth of games in general for Sony's portable wonder relative to competing systems. It seems Sony is, too: *Burnout Legends*, *Star Wars Battlefront II*, and the games you point out are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg for this fall.

BUT WHAT ABOUT E-ICY, THE STRONG AND MOST FEARED?

I was just amazed by the cool create a characters (CAC) the *OPM* staff made in *Soul Calibur III*. That segment in the review, seeing Cloud, Strider, and Dante, had to be my favorite part. Would it be possible for you guys to include a downloadable save of your characters on a future *OPM* demo disc? I would really love to play with your version of I-No (which you didn't have a picture of) and Strider. Thanks.

Lowell
Via e-mail

What a great suggestion! We'll do it. Watch for this fun download on the DVD soon.

THAT'S ONE VOTE FOR

I have been an avid reader of *OPM* since... well for a *very* long time. I love the previews, reviews, the inside scoop, and, well, almost everything. I just received Issue #98 today, and, as always, started reading from the front cover. I stopped on page 20, and my jaw dropped. I had noticed on 1UP.com that plastic cases for the demo discs were closer to a possibility. Then I read your response. *Test marketing* to see if people like it? You have been hounded for years in regard to the lack of a plastic case to protect the coveted demo discs inside the mag. You already know people are going to *love* it. As for me, I have almost stopped playing most of the demo discs due to the fact that they almost never work. Yes, I called Underground—I went through the steps for *months* to get decent demo discs. I'm tired of it. I even stopped my subscription because I felt like I was getting gypped. Well, now I have a subscription again; I beg you, I advise you, *the plastic cases are a great idea.* It is worth it. We the masses will once again bow down to the most comprehensive, and soon to be regarded as the best in customer service (I hope), PlayStation magazine in the universe.

Merrill McKee
Via e-mail

Thanks for the vote, Merrill—we hear you.

HE AND HIS SHADOW

After receiving my new issue of *OPM*, I read about *Shadow of the Colossus* and immediately was intrigued by the plot of the game. It's a simple task of running through a large (beautifully made) landscape to find the colossi and kill them. With only a short task of taking a couple of jumps and climbing a wall before you can get to the boss, there is virtually no other enemy, just lots of bosses. Could this be the beginning of a new genre, perhaps? After finishing the demo I was breathless: The graphics were stunning and everything about the battle was exhilarating. All I know is that this game is on my wish list.

Joey Fors
Via e-mail

Ours too! «

ASK US ANYTHING

AND WE'LL ANSWER

WE PREDICT PAYNE

Q It's been a while since the first *Max Payne* came out, and I've been waiting for the movie to come out. In the game pamphlet it said that they were making a movie based on the game. Did it already come out and I didn't know about it?

Dillon
Via e-mail

A Where have you been? The *Max Payne* movie won an Oscar and is the highest-grossing film of all time. Oh, wait, we're confusing it with *Titanic*. The *Max Payne* movie, which was announced just this past June, is still in development. Expect a 2007 release.

OR 7-ELEVEN?

Q Krispy Kreme or Dunkin' Donuts?

Kaiser Sozay
Via e-mail

A Tom: Dunkin' Donuts!
Dana: If glazed, Krispy; if cake, Dunkin'.
Joe: There is discussion about this? Krispy Kreme's chocolate cakey glazed doughnut is the devil's own delicious handiwork.
Scooter: Triple K minus one K.
Giancarlo: Krispy.
Ryan: 7/11 DONUTS FTW!!!11!!
Alejandro: Krispy NOW!
Logan: To me it has always been an East Coast versus West Coast sorta thing.

NO VAGRANCY?

Q I was wondering why nobody has made a sequel to *Vagrant Story*. They are making sequels to some lame games. So why not a *Vagrant Story 2*?

Rick
Via e-mail

A When we asked Square Enix (Squaresoft was the original publisher of the game) for comment, they simply replied they could "neither confirm nor deny" the possibility of a *Vagrant Story 2*. But hey, at least that's not a "no." Like you, we'd love to see a sequel, too.

BLOG OF THE MONTH

"I arrived in Japan on Tuesday after a grueling 13-hour plane ride from NYC. I took a really nice coach bus from Narita Airport to my hotel. I was staying at the Shibuya Excel Hotel Tokyu.

It was a nice hotel. The rooms were very nice, and the bed comfortable...that is all I could ask for. Anyway, after I settled in, I decided I was going to walk around a little. I went over to the Shibuya Tsutaya, and who do I see but my good friend Mario—I guess he was there trying to sell the new Game Boy Micro.

After I said my goodbyes, I went with John over to karaoke in Shinjuku. I finally met his girlfriend, who is super sweet, and hung out with a bunch of guys that I know from *EGM* and 1UP (guys like EGM Shane and Ferricide). I also hung out with Andrew Vestal and some of John's other friends. After karaoke, we left, and I went back to the hotel to crash."

Anthony Parisi
parisi.1UP.com

CLUB OF THE MONTH

Everyone's excited about Kojima's latest opus for the PS3, especially these guys.

Metal Gear Solid 4
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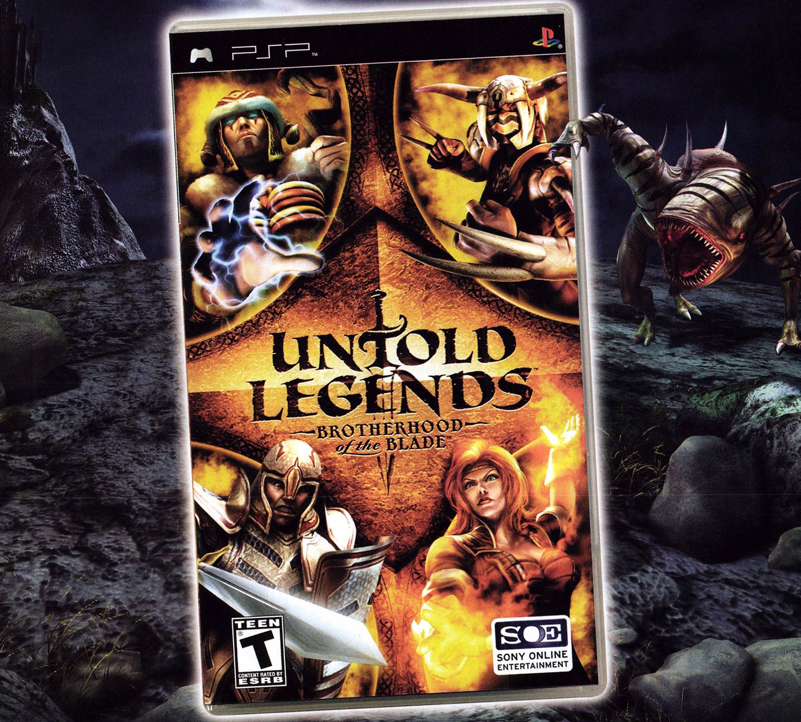

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LOOK INTO THE
EYES OF THE

THINK YOU KNOW KONG? THINK AGAIN.

BREATHING HEAVILY, YOU CROUCH IN A DENSE THICKET OF JUNGLE VINES. Twenty yards away, a hungry V-Rex rages through the trees, hunting for his dinner. Fear pierces your gut as you realize your trusty weapon is empty. Suddenly, an impossibly huge ape bodyslams the V-Rex, sending it sprawling. And a titanic struggle erupts before your eyes. Welcome to Skull Island – and the unforgettable world of Peter Jackson's King Kong.

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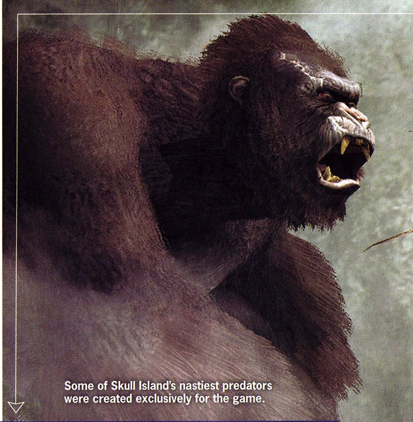


Some of Skull Island's nastiest predators were created exclusively for the game.

KING KONG FIRST MADE HIS CINEMATIC DEBUT in 1933, thrilling audiences with a powerful story and groundbreaking special effects for its time. Peter Jackson's current reimagining promises to do no less, bringing the perilous world of Skull Island to life as only Jackson can – Jackson and famed game designer Michel Ancel, that is.

> "[Ancel] has just a great storytelling skill in making you so involved in the game as a player that you actually become emotionally attached to the characters that you're playing with." – Peter Jackson.

+ + + + + + + +

AN AVID GAMER, PETER JACKSON STARTED DREAMING UP IDEAS for a King Kong video game as soon as he started the movie. But to make a video game as memorable as the movie, he needed a creative partner with a true talent for rendering both fantasy and emotion. Then he played Beyond Good & Evil™, an epic adventure crafted by renowned game designer Michel Ancel. Right away, Jackson knew he'd found his man. And, judging by the jaw-dropping beauty and intensity of the gameplay, Jackson and Ancel have succeeded brilliantly.

BREATHING LIFE INTO A LEGEND

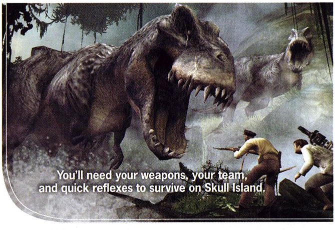
Jackson and Ancel set out to create a game deeper and more immersive than the film itself. So the game had to look and feel just as convincing as the "real" world captured on film. To achieve this, the development team used every trick in the book – plus a few that aren't.

A rare technique called "inverse kinematics" adds frightening realism to the behavior of Skull Island's predators. This technique varies and synchronizes the animations used for each type of creature, depending on the creature's AI. For example, if you're detected by a V-Rex, you'll see the monster turn its eyes and head directly toward you, lunging over rocks and smashing through the jungle in a convincing attempt to make you its dinner.

But techniques like inverse kinematics would mean little without a sophisticated AI system governing the behavior of Skull Island's denizens. Some species attack alone, while others use clever pursuit tactics to attack in groups. Fortunately, your enemies aren't the only intelligent creatures on Skull Island. Your crew will protect you, suggest solutions to problems, and generally react as real humans – real *scared* humans – would.

And just wait till you feast your eyes on the stunningly detailed jungle of Skull Island. Thanks to clever layering of the largest number of 2D sprites, filters, and effects ever used in any video game – including meteorological effects like water, fog, wind, fire, and smoke – you'll almost be able to feel the hot, humid jungle air. Blades of grass rustle convincingly around your legs. Sunlight patterns shift subtly. In short, this jungle doesn't just look pretty. It feels alive.

Perhaps the greatest creation of all is Kong himself. Agile and powerful, Kong moves through Skull Island with remarkable force and speed. And take a close look at his fur; the dev team used intricate 3D effects to actually animate each separate strand. The overall effect is breathtakingly real.



You'll need your weapons, your team, and quick reflexes to survive on Skull Island.

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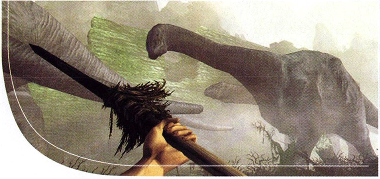
Where guns fail, brute strength often prevails.



A MASSIVE STEP FORWARD: INNOVATIONS IN IMMERSION

Every technical decision for Peter Jackson's King Kong has been made with an eye to thoroughly immersing the player in the world of the game. For example, you can still move and look around while scripted plot events occur, unlike nearly all other games. And the absence of a heads-up display makes the action feel more immediate. For example, when your character suffers an injury, you won't see any shrinking "health bar." Instead, your vision will blur and turn red.

The game also offers new experiences that don't appear in the movie. In addition to movie creatures, Jackson added beasts not seen in the film. Multiple pathways offer you a different experience every time you play, so that you'll never have to play the same game twice. The difficulty level scales fluidly according to your performance, growing more challenging as you improve.

Most impressive of all is the range of emotions evoked by the alternating gameplay possibilities. By inviting you to play as both Jack Driscoll and Kong himself, the game delivers an unforgettable mix of intensity, realism, and entertainment through a rare combination of first- and third-person play.

PLAYING WITH POWER: HEROES GREAT AND SMALL

Conceived by Jackson and realized to phenomenal effect by the development team, the dual gameplay between Jack and Kong delivers a dramatic shift in perspective and power.

As Jack Driscoll, you're outnumbered and overpowered by predators bigger, stronger, and faster than you. To heighten the sense of fear and danger, you play Jack's role in first-person. You'll have to advance through a dense jungle, never knowing what lurks behind the next tree. Armed only with the weapons you can carry, you'll never win just by fighting. To stay alive, you'll need other strategies, such as tricking predators into battling each other and using the environment to set clever traps.

At a key moment, you begin playing Kong in third-person. When the camera pulls back to reveal Kong's mighty perspective, you feel a rush of freedom and power. Delivered from the harried perspective of Jack, you inherit swift movements, powerful battle attacks, and the gratifying ability to smash, throw, and scale just about everything around you. But playing as Kong isn't just a walk in the park. Confronted by multiple enemies with clever attack patterns, you'll have to fight hard to defeat huge V-Rexes and outsmart swarms of smaller predators.

The alternating gameplay intensifies the emotions already inherent in the story. Ancel, like Jackson, never loses sight of his audience, meting out new challenges just when you want them the most. The result is nothing short of an unforgettable game experience. ■

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

PlayStation®2

XBOX

XBOX 360

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Violence

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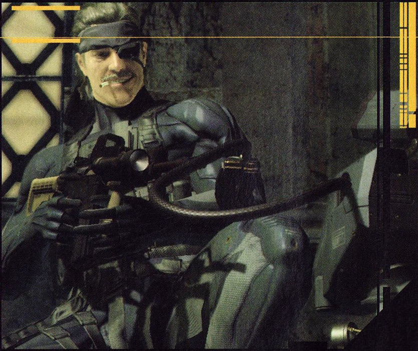

HYPE

PREVIEWS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

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They might be giants.

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Japan gets cool games—will we?

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CONSOLE WARS REPORT CARD

SCHOOL IS IN SESSION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF GAMING SYSTEMS

OVERHEARD

"You're looking at the key to winning the console war," Otacon telling Snake about the PS3's Cell processor in the *MGS4* trailer.

The Tokyo Game Show came and went, and in the midst of all the panic and excitement surrounding the show, we actually learned quite a bit more about the PlayStation 3 and its two next-generation competitors: Nintendo's Revolution and Microsoft's Xbox 360. At this point, it's anyone's guess as to which console will be the most successful or if one idea or strategy proves to be better than another, but there's no question that the race for the No. 1 spot in the videogame market is heating up and will continue to do so in the following months—but how do things stand now?

THE CONTROLLER

PLAYSTATION 3

The biggest complaint about the PlayStation 3 has always been its controller, which looks like a boomerang or a large, plastic banana—take your pick. The Tokyo Game Show was a perfect opportunity for Sony to show off a redesigned controller, if there is indeed one in the works, but instead, Sony chose to remain quiet and let other companies steal the spotlight. Of course, there's also a distinct possibility that Sony wanted to sit back and see what Nintendo had in store so that it could then make any necessary adjustments to its controller. It's a dirty technique, but no one ever said the videogame business was squeaky clean.

Grade: C-

Redesigned PlayStation 3 banana a no-show

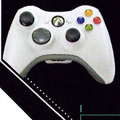
REVOLUTION

For several months now, people have been speculating about Nintendo's super-top-secret controller. Will it have motion sensors? Will it have a touch screen like the DS? Will it make pancakes? Many of these questions were finally answered at the Tokyo Game Show when Nintendo unveiled the Revolution controller—though it's not really a controller. It's more like a TV remote with motion sensors. The idea seems pretty ridiculous at first, but there's actually quite a bit of potential in the types of games that can be created with this control method in mind. However, it might make the console race difficult for Nintendo in the long run since both Sony and Microsoft are using more traditional control methods.

Grade: B+

A great idea by Nintendo—and possibly utilized only by Nintendo

XBOX 360



We already know plenty about the Xbox 360—the PlayStation 3's biggest competitor—and its controller, since the system's launch is imminent. Microsoft is taking a page out of Sony's book by using an "if it's not broken, don't fix it" mentality. The 360 controller isn't a drastic departure from the current Xbox controller, but it does have some added functionality designed for use with Xbox Live—one of the 360's most prominent and important features. While it would've been great to see a little more innovation, going with what works isn't such a bad idea.

Grade: B+

Sony, take note

THE GAMES

PLAYSTATION 3

While the PlayStation 3 didn't have the most games (we'll call them games since they're closer to being representative of what actual PS3 games will be like than the E3 demos were), it had two of the heaviest hitters in the form of *Metal Gear Solid 4* and *Devil May Cry 4*. Plus, there were several other great-looking projects on hand as well, including Factor 5's *Lair*, Sega's next-generation *Sonic the Hedgehog* game, *Warhawk*, and *Resident Evil 5*. But for obvious reasons, the *Metal Gear Solid 4* trailer easily stole the show—if it is any indication of what we can expect in terms of visuals or gameplay mechanics, then it's no wonder why Sony wants to have the game ready for the PS3 as soon as possible.

Grade: B-

Awesome-looking stuff, but show us some *real* games

REVOLUTION

Nintendo didn't show *any* Revolution games at TGS (or anywhere else for that matter), but it did give people a chance to test out the controller mechanics on a few demos, one of which was of *Metroid Prime*. When will Nintendo show off the first Revolution games? Who knows? But one thing is certain: Both Microsoft and Sony have an ample head start in the software race.

Grade: F

The Revolution's games are waiting for a different party

XBOX 360

In an effort to help the 360 sell well in both Japan and North America, Microsoft has courted some high-profile Japanese developers, including Mistwalker (headed by *Final Fantasy* creator Hironobu Sakaguchi), Square Enix, Namco, and Capcom—all of which are producing pretty high-profile games for the system. Additionally, Microsoft continues to get support from Tecmo and other Xbox developers that have chosen to stick with the platform. All of this has resulted in a pretty robust lineup that caters to the full gaming spectrum, though few of the games have been jaw-dropping from a technical standpoint.

Grade: B

Lots of support but missing a few marquee franchises

MIDTERM EVALUATION

All three next-generation consoles had an impressive showing at TGS in some form or another. Nintendo's Revolution controller was a big surprise and seems to have captured the attention of just about everyone, with some positive results. Sony showed that the PlayStation 3 hardware is no joke and that developers are already cranking out some incredibly impressive-looking content. The Xbox 360 looks like it's in a prime position to gain a foothold in the next-generation race by being the first console out of the gate and by garnering wide support from developers around the world. «

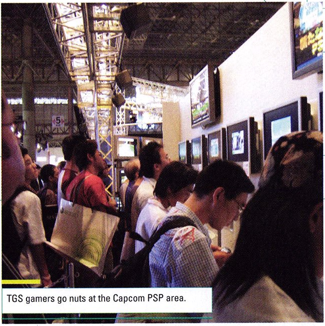
KOJIMA
TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION
METAL GEAR SOLID 3
SUBSISTENCE

There was a pretty motivational prize for winning the *MGS3: Subsistence* online tournament: plaques of victory from Kojima and white PSPs. Also, we think girls with kerotan hats are cute.

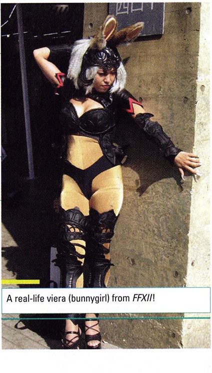
TOKYO GAME SHOW

PHOTOS FROM THE LAND OF THE RISING FUN

TGS is an interesting phenomenon: It's about half the size of E3, at most, but it feels a lot more crowded. The main reason for that is because TGS is open to the public: Anyone with a mere 1,200 yen (about 12 bucks) can buy a ticket and wander the halls, looking at booth babes, playing games, and even hitting up official company stores for swag like $800 *RE4* jackets or $100 king slimes. TGS is also something of a unifier of families, as we saw many parents escorting their young children through the halls, picking up shopping bags and filling them with free catalogs, tiny Bandai figurines, postcards of anime womenfolk, and demo discs (we snagged an *Okami* one from a line that was similar in length to a line for the Matterhorn at Disneyland on a sweet summer's day). When attendees weren't picking up swag, they were hanging out in wacky booths, like Sega's yakuza lounge or Konami's dating game show studio, and gawking at the legion of cosplayers willing to display their craft.



TGS gamers go nuts at the Capcom PSP area.

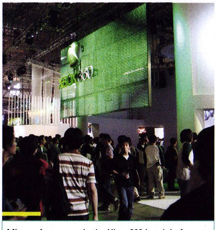


A real-life viera (bunnygirl) from *FFXII*!

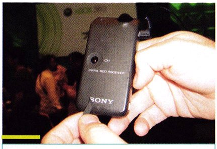
In the alley between halls at the convention center, cosplayers line the walls and get some tans courtesy of the bajillion camera flashes. We particularly admire this *FFVII*-themed duo. Also note the cosplayer line below!

Sergeant Frog tours the convention circuit.

A schoolgirl slapping a squidman, of course!



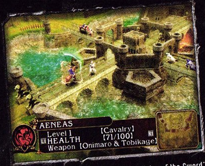
Microsoft even made the Xbox 360 booth hefty.



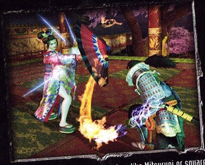
A translation device at the Xbox 360 conference.

ONE MAN'S CREATION IS ANOTHER'S DEMISE.

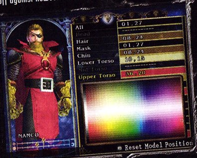
The battle begins anew in SOULCALIBUR III when Nightmare returns to a world inhabited by classic and new warriors. Create and play with a character choosing the face, hair, armor and weapons you want in "Character Creation" mode. Employ strategy and classic combat to lead your original character and the team to victory in "Chronicles of the Sword" mode. Experience the world of SOULCALIBUR like never before.


AENEAS
Level 1 [Cavalry]
HEALTH [71/100]
Weapon [Onimaro & Tobikage]

Explore the SOULCALIBUR world in "Chronicles of the Sword" and test your abilities in a real-time simulation.



Battle classic SOULCALIBUR warriors like Mitsurugi or square off against newcomers such as Zasalamel, Setsuka and Tira.


All 01,27
Head
Hair 08,24
Mask 01,27
Chin 08,24
Lower Torso 10,15
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Upper Torso 56,20
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Reset Model Position

Create your own character and battle other players or legendary SOULCALIBUR warriors.

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PlayStation 2

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J-TOWN

GAMING NEWS FROM THE EAST

TOKYO DISNEYLAND

E3 is like Disney World. It's more than a show; it's an all-encompassing life event. The booths and displays in its four main halls aren't designed to entertain you. Their purpose is to subsume you, to overwhelm you so completely for three full days that you can't remember the outside world over the din. Long lines, costumed mascots, $6 bottled water—E3 is the all-singing, all-dancing, ultimate electronic entertainment experience. You can't just show up at E3 and expect to have a good time; like an assault on the megalithic Disney World, when attending E3, a map of the park and a tight schedule on your Clipboard of Fun are essential to maximizing your enjoyment coefficient.

The Tokyo Game Show is like Disneyland. From the outside, it looks a lot like its bigger brother, but it's actually quite a bit smaller—and quite a bit more manageable. This is no slight; in many ways, Tokyo Game Show's smaller size makes it a more enjoyable and rewarding show. It's possible to "do" the Tokyo Game Show in a single day, seeing everything you want to see, playing everything you want to play, and making it home in time for *Hey! Hey! Hey! Music Champ*. In contrast, any E3 in which you accomplish half your to-do list is a smashing success.

Friday, the first day of the show, is industry only, but on Saturday and Sunday, the doors open to the public. Little work gets done, thanks to the crowds, but little needs to be, thanks to Friday. TGS's already relaxed atmosphere is amplified by the costume-clad cosplayers, who often outdo the hired mascots with the fidelity of their costumes. The number of cosplayers was down this year, but those who did dress the part were semiprofessional and only too eager to preen for the cameras. The merchandise booths are something else missing from E3—after all, why give away swag when you can sell it? Publishers' offerings range from mascot keychains ($2-$3) and replica jewelry ($50-$200) to terrifying, doe-eyed life-size replicas of *Tokimeki Memorial* characters ($2,000 and up).

TGS IS INVIGORATING; E3 FEELS LIKE WORK.

In a nutshell: E3 is draining, TGS is invigorating; E3 feels like work, TGS feels like fun.

So don't write off TGS as the "E3 of the fall"—this trade show has evolved an identity all its own.

THINK BIG, THINK SMALL

The *Metal Gear Solid 4* demo for PlayStation 3 was easily the most talked-about piece of software at TGS this year. Showgoers looking for buzz-building *playable* software needed to set their sights a lot lower—all the way down to Sony's PSP. SCEI's *LocoRoco* was the surprise talk of the show floor. Players use the L and R buttons in this puzzle-platformer to rotate the environment and guide a smiling blobby thing past dangerous obstacles. *LocoRoco*'s original gameplay mechanics and vibrant graphical style made it an immediate hit.

One game showed what a top-class development team with a multimillion-dollar budget can do with the power of the PlayStation 3. The other game featured a simple, circular blob merrily bounding his way across a colorful landscape. It's hard to imagine two more different titles, but both games impressed attendees. And that's a good thing.

Diversity and originality are critical to the future of the game industry. When audiences expand the sort of game they're willing to accept, developers can broaden the sort of games they're willing to create. It's worth noting that *LocoRoco* is a PSP game; both the Nintendo DS and PSP have seen great success in Japan, thanks in large part to the time gamers spend riding the country's ubiquitous train lines. Additionally, portable games can be made far more cheaply than next-generation console titles, so developers are more likely to take risks on innovative gameplay ideas. It may be too much to ask that developers risk derailing their $40 million PS3 games with crazy, experimental gameplay schemes. But as long as they keep developing smaller, more original titles on the side, we won't have to. « *Andrew Vestal*

Tokyo
GAME SHOW

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NEW YORK C

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M
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language
Strong Sexual Content
Use of Drugs
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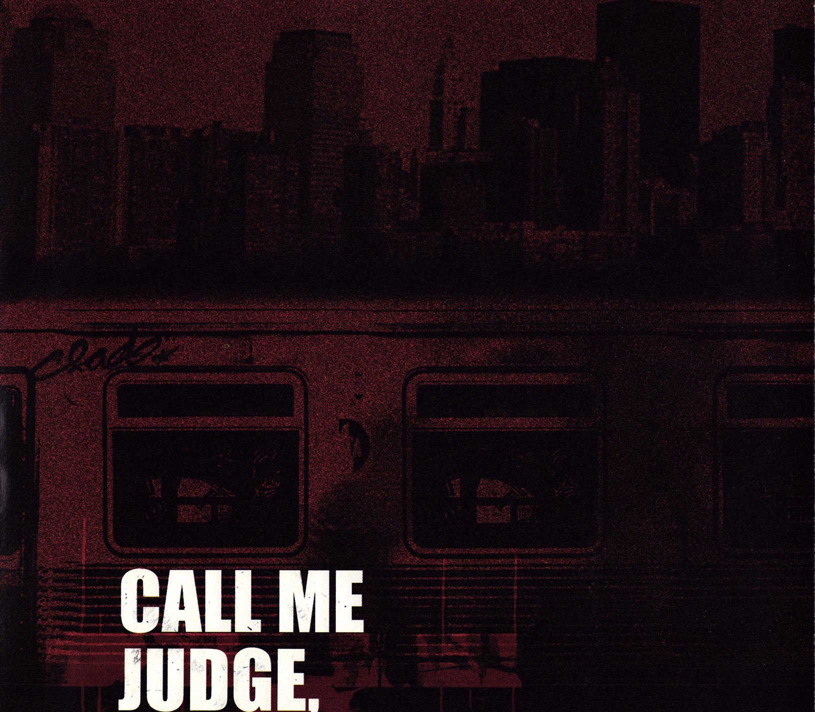
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- Detective Marcus Reed

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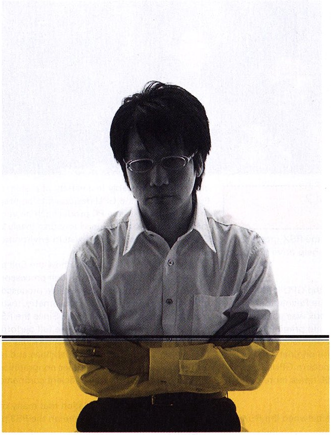


PIRATES OF THE PSP

If you've been following the homebrew development scene for the PSP, you're probably already aware that there have been a number of developments regarding the 2.0 update that Sony released not so long ago for the hardware. Not only does it appear that a group of programmers has discovered a way to crack the update and enable user-created software to run on a 2.0-updated PSP, but there is also a patch out there that enables 2.0 users to go back to version 1.5 if they want to continue using software designed for the 1.5 update. While Sony CEA hasn't officially gone on record saying it will combat homebrew development on the PSP, it appears that it's taking a wait-and-see attitude and will make moves accordingly if piracy gets out of control. «

SONY'S WOES

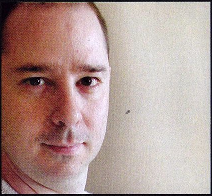
The PlayStation and its successors aren't enough to stem the onslaught of a poor economy on Sony's bottom line. Sir Howard Stringer, Sony's head honcho, announced that around 10,000 more jobs would be eliminated—4,000 of those will be in its Japan offices, while the other 6,000 will be from Sony locations around the world. The company also plans to shut down 11 manufacturing plants as part of a plan to streamline costs. Fortunately for gamers, Sony recognizes the importance of its gaming division and will continue to push the PSP, PS2, and PlayStation 3 to the forefront of its business. «

KEEPING UP WITH KOJIMA

Fans of the *Metal Gear Solid* creator and designer will be happy to know that Hideo Kojima has started a new blog (sorry, non-Japanese speakers), in which he discusses a variety of topics, ranging from games (*Metal Gear*, naturally) to music and other forms of entertainment. It gives an interesting look into Kojima's mind and how he approaches the *Metal Gear* games. Be sure to check out www.1UP.com for a recap of Kojima's blog. «

THE WATCHDOG

THE STEALTH COMPUTER



JOHN SCALZI is our man keeping an eye on things for the benefit of all gamers. You can see more of his thoughts at www.scalzi.com.

Back in the days when I was but a tender young lad and the Atari 2600 roamed the earth like some pixelated dinosaur, that system had a cartridge called *Basic Programming*. It allowed you to create little programs for the 2600, and I do mean little (they were limited to 64 characters or some such ridiculous amount). You wrote them using Atari's clumsy controllers, and then you ran them, and that was it: The 2600 being what it was, you couldn't save your programs even if you wanted to. But in 1979, that was as close to a computer experience as a console was going to get.

Come 2006, the PlayStation 3 will be the latest console, and while the vast majority of the people who buy the thing will use it to play games (and why not—that's what we've always known consoles were for), the geeks and freaks who poke under the hood are going to be able to do a lot more than I could with the *Basic Programming* cartridge in 1979. Some data to consider: IBM—one of the members of the brain trust behind the Cell microprocessor—has been actively courting the open-source computing community, even putting informational resources online for the geeks to fiddle with. (You, too, can thrill to documents like "Synergistic Processor Unit (SPU) Instruction Set Architecture V1.0"—it's all at www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/power/cell/.)

Sony Computer Entertainment President Ken Kutaragi suggested earlier this year that optional hard drives for the PS3 might ship with some version of the Linux operating system on them, and there have been other hints that the Cell processor could handle Mac and Windows operating systems (if their makers decided to make them available). More prosaically, the PS3 will be able to accommodate USB keyboards and mice—very nice for those of us who want to play FPS games with any accuracy, but they also provide full input capability for those folks who want to fiddle.

What this all means is that for somewhere in the area of $500 (PS3, extra hard drive, keyboard, and mouse), millions of people could be getting an extraordinarily capable, fully functional computer cleverly disguised as a game console.

Does this matter? It should matter to computer manufacturers and OS producers: If people figure out that they can add a second computer to their homes with the addition of a single hard drive, that has the potential to reconfigure computer sales, particularly on the lower end. It could offer Linux the foothold it needs to compete against Windows in the larger OS market. It also positions Sony and the PlayStation as the heart of a home media center—a concept and market that computer industry types are slitting each other's throats to compete in.

In short, the PS3 (and, to be fair, the Xbox 360, which has the potential to offer the same sort of functionality) is a stealth computer waiting to be tapped. I think it's got the potential to blow a hole in the computer market—and I think it will. And I think it will be very interesting to see what happens once it does.

In the meantime, I know this much: I was planning to buy a new computer relatively soon—probably before the PS3 came out. But for now, I'm going to wait. I need to see what the PS3 can do first. That sort of behavior should make PC-makers distinctly nervous. «

THE PS3 IS A STEALTH COMPUTER WAITING TO BE TAPPED.

JEN-HSUN HUANG

ANSWER ME THESE, PLAYSTATION 3

NVIDIA'S POWERHOUSE PROCESSOR

Nvidia President Jen-Hsun Huang explains why the RSX graphics processor, along with Sony's Cell processor, will help drive graphics into the next generation.

OPM How does the new processor compare to the GPU in the original Xbox or the ATI GPUs in the Xbox 360 and the Revolution?
JEN-HSUN HUANG The GPU in the original Xbox was phenomenally powerful and flexible for its time but is quite primitive compared to modern programmable GPUs. GPU performance has been doubling every six to nine months, and since the original Xbox is approximately 5 years old, one would expect modern GPUs, such as the GeForce 7800, to be approximately 50 to 100 times more powerful, and in fact they are.

OPM What would you say is the key difference between the RSX GPU and previous Nvidia products?
JH PC graphics and core-logic products must be flexible and work efficiently and reliably in a variety of system configurations. This flexibility forces the GPU designers to be prepared for a wide variety of workloads so that a PC product can be very good at very many things. The RSX is designed to work closely with [the PlayStation 3's Cell processor] in a closed-system environment.

OPM Can you briefly describe how the Cell processor works in tandem with the RSX GPU? Is the Cell processor a good fit for the RSX?
JH The Cell processor has multiple processors that can execute different threads and produce geometry, texture, and shader information for the RSX to consume. Since the RSX is so powerful, in some cases it will take almost the full performance of the Cell just to keep the RSX busy. The Cell processor has enormous floating-point processing and throughput capabilities and is an excellent engine for physics, gameplay, and other nongraphical tasks. The RSX is designed to be a powerful, efficient companion processor to the Cell.

OPM There is some speculation that many of the demos shown at E3 couldn't be done in real time on the PS3 hardware. Do you think this is true?
JH There's no question the demos are possible on PS3 hardware. «

ZOE FLOWER

THOUGHTS IN GRAYSCALE

ZOE FLOWER is a young and fresh columnist who wants you to know she is just kidding when she says she is 32 years old. Unless you think she looks 24. In which case, she thanks you profusely.

AM I CLINGING TO MY YOUTH THROUGH VIDEOGAMES?

OK, I admit it. I'm in my 30s now (just barely!), and I am suddenly seeing a marked increase in the number of friends who feel I'm too old to be spending afternoons cozied up to my PS2, ranting about a race result in *Burnout Revenge*, or daring my neighbor (who is a very mature 8-year-old) to beat my high score. Sure, I've been acting childish lately—mainly because I wasn't in Japan for the Tokyo Game Show. Instead, I became one of many rabid fans surfing the Web at 3 a.m. for news of *Metal Gear Solid 4* and the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII. It was during these anxious hours between random overseas drunk-dial calls and bogus Kojima hallucinations that I started to wonder if my friends were just a little bit right. Am I clinging to my youth through videogames?

Halfway through my *MGS4* trailer download I begin to panic. I can clearly see my own obsession with everything new and young and sexy as I drool over a screenshot of the PS3. I want it. I have to have it. Why? There is nothing wrong with my current console collection! I can't even get through the games I have right now! But if I stop caring about what is new and fresh...will I then officially be old? Thankfully, I am roused from my ridiculous self-analysis by a Kojima Productions logo shimmering from my monitor. And what do I soon see but the riveting face of my boyfr-...er...favorite game character, Solid Snake. Yet, he is different. He's old! He is grizzled and haggard—not to mention rendered beautifully in high-definition detail. Curiously, I still find him extremely intriguing and sexy. (Once I get past the gray *Mario Bros.* moustache. I can live with the eye patch.)

How symbolic! All this time I've spent getting older, games have been aging right alongside me. As Tokyo showcases the future of our industry (alongside an unhealthy love of dressing up in spandex), I realize my current passion stems from the memories of games gone by. My lust for information about the *Final Fantasy VII* side games comes from a need for closure after the trauma I suffered while playing the original. It's often the memory of a game that ends up transcending the game itself, so much so that years after completing a game, we are still moved by a specific story that struck home (read: left you a sniveling girlish mess, induced a victory dance in your pajamas at 4 a.m., or scared you so badly that you slept with the lights on for a week). Or we wish we could revisit a certain time in life to recapture particularly exciting moments, like playing *Quake* online for the first time, sharing my spastic love of *God of War* at E3, or watching Lara Croft swim in high resolution and knowing games would take over the world.

Perhaps playing games isn't about clinging to our youth. It's about creating timeless memories we can relive later when a gray moustache and eye patch might well be a reality. «

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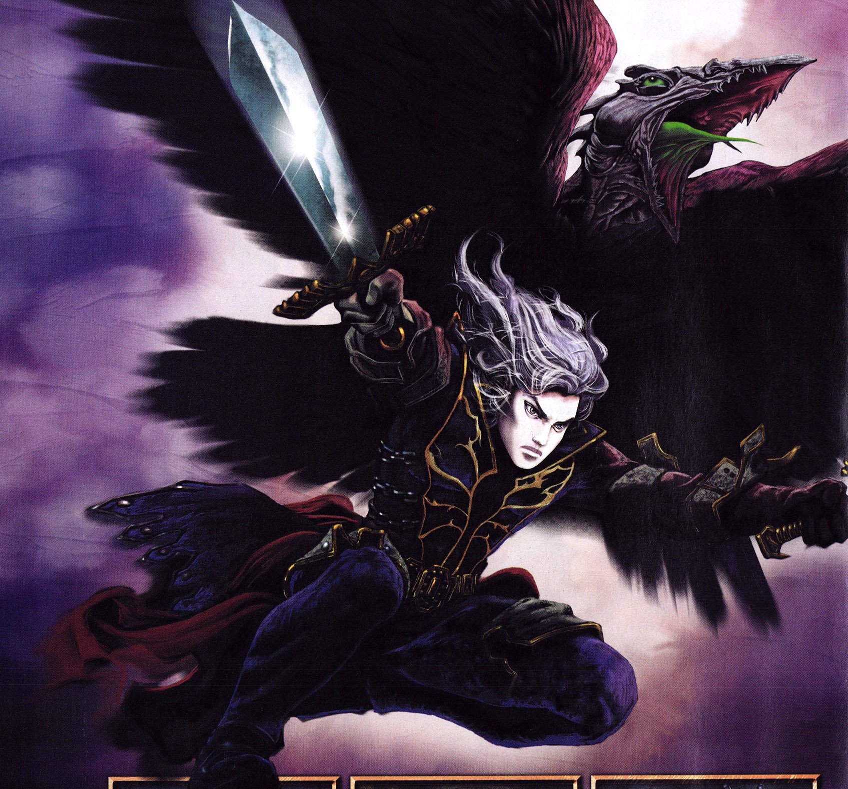

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Innocent Devil

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HP
Innocent Devil

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HP
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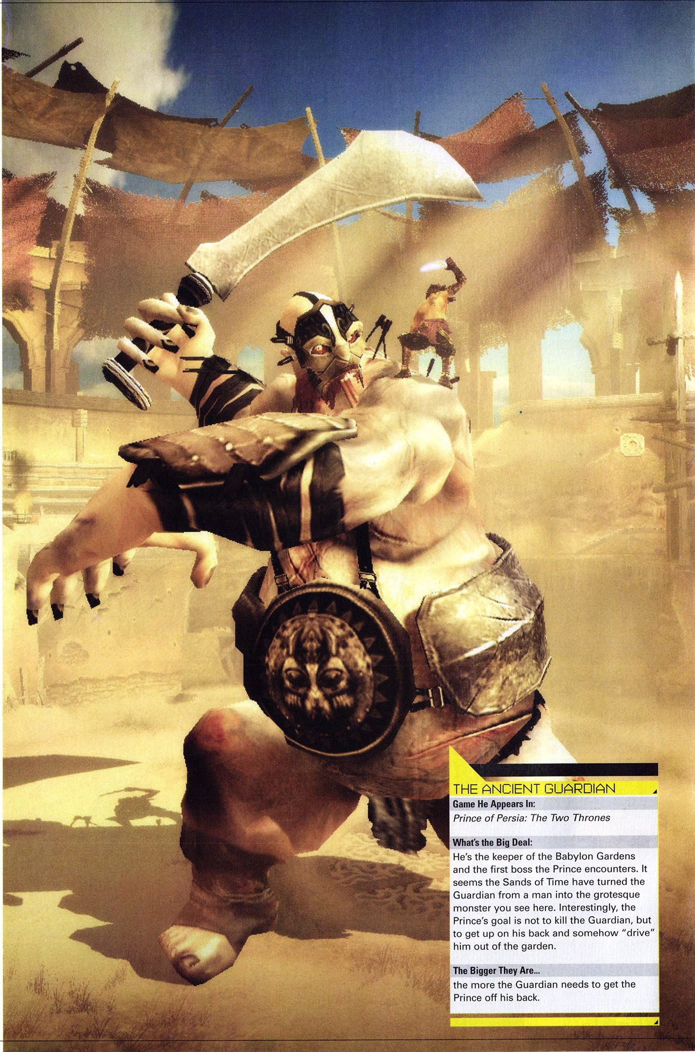
TRENDSPOTTER

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

Maybe you haven't noticed lately, but the average height of videogame characters has increased quite dramatically over the past few months. The vertically challenged can now live vicariously through several games with characters that are larger than life.



THE ANCIENT GUARDIAN

Game He Appears In:

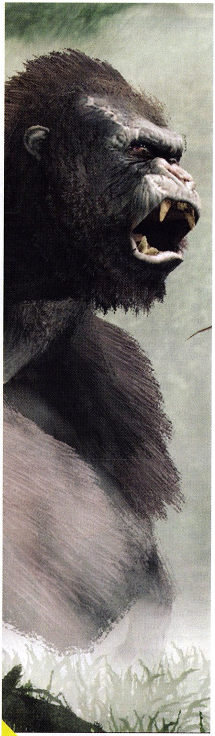
Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones

What's the Big Deal:

He's the keeper of the Babylon Gardens and the first boss the Prince encounters. It seems the Sands of Time have turned the Guardian from a man into the grotesque monster you see here. Interestingly, the Prince's goal is not to kill the Guardian, but to get up on his back and somehow "drive" him out of the garden.

The Bigger They Are...

the more the Guardian needs to get the Prince off his back.



KING KONG

Game He Appears In

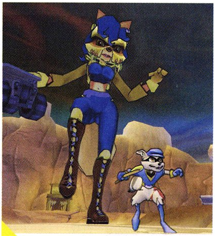
Peter Jackson's King Kong

What's the Big Deal

He's a giant ape who's just trying to make a go of it while surrounded by hostile villagers and bloodthirsty dinos. But then a sexy starlet shows up and everything goes to hell. Love hurts.

The Bigger They Are...

the greater the chances that the movie and game might flop, but we think both projects are a little too important for Jackson (who is an avid gamer) to let that happen.



CARMELITA

Game She Appears In:

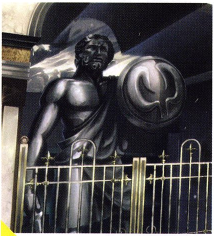
Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves

What's the Big Deal:

Police inspector Carmelita is attacked by a mystical Australian mud mask that turns her into a drugged-out, power-crazed giant. Sly (who has a crush on her) has to climb up and unhook the mask to help her return to normal.

The Bigger They Are...

the more fur there is to love. No seriously, that's a whole lot of anthropomorphic action going on there.



COLOSSUS

Game He Appears In

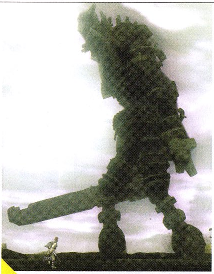
Soul Calibur III

What's the Big Deal:

If you need any sort of indication of how crazy some of the fights get in *Soul Calibur III*, look no further than the story mode, where you'll have to do battle with the colossal statue of Zeus found in the background of Sophitia's stage.

The Bigger They Are...

the harder they fall, especially in this case. Watch out when that colossus comes crashing down on top of you.



COLOSSI

Game They Appear In:

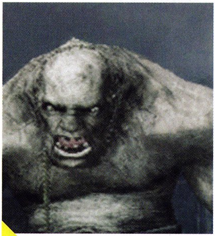
Shadow of the Colossus

What's the Big Deal:

This one is pretty self-explanatory. The whole game is based around taking down a dozen or so giants wandering the countryside by climbing their limbs and performing a rather brutal version of acupuncture.

The Bigger They Are...

the harder they die, but not in that Bruce Willis kind of way. Some of the later colossi are really tough since their weaknesses aren't as easy to find.



LOS GIGANTES

Game They Appear In:

Resident Evil 4

What's the Big Deal:

OK, they might not be of colossal size, but they're big enough for the local Spaniards to call "the giants," and they're the biggest dudes in the game. And take it from us, they're a total pain to take down 1-on-1.

The Bigger They Are...

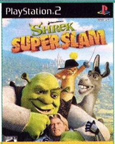
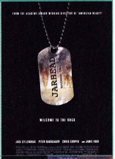
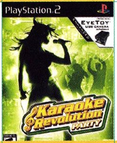
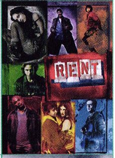
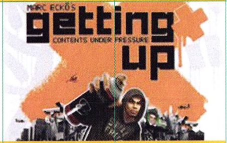
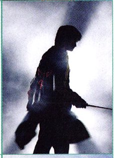
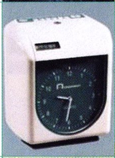
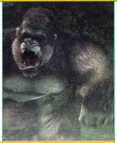
the more we think the fact that one of the El Gigantes sports chains and a leather mask suggests some really unsavory extracurricular activities with "el gigantito."

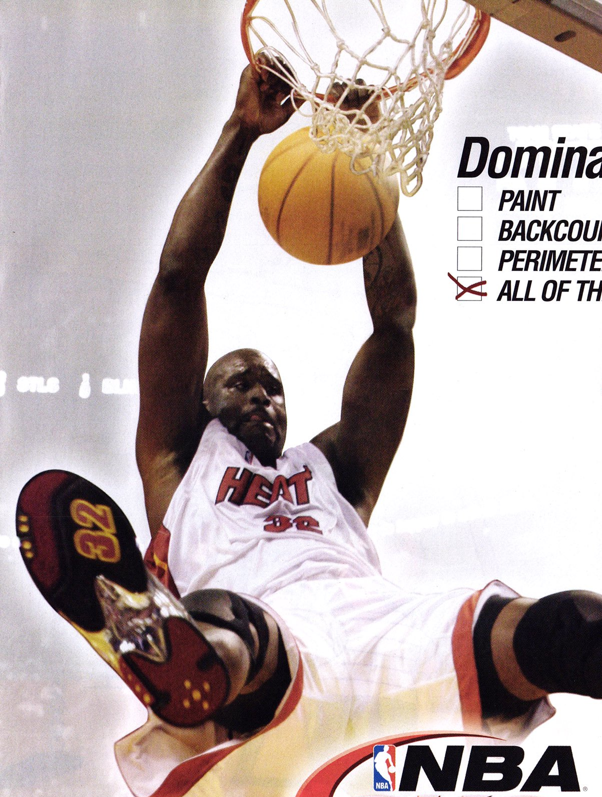
WHO WOULD WIN

If we had to pit all of these giants against each other in a large ring of fire where they had to battle to the death, we think that King Kong would probably come out on top. There's no particular reason we think so, other than to say that King Kong is a rather large gorilla. And as we all know, gorillas are really cool—especially when they do that thing where they slap the ground and pretend like they're charging.

NOVEMBER 2K5

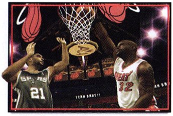
THE MONTH AHEAD FOR YOU AND YOUR PLAYSTATION

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
		01 Games like ***Dynasty Warriors 5: Xtreme Legends, Call of Duty 2: Big Red One, Guitar Hero,*** and ***From Russia With Love*** arrive en masse today. **[NEW GAMES]**	 PlayStation 2 Shrek SuperSlam	**03** Man, we're obsessed with food. North Dakota declares today **Bean Day**, and this is also **John Montagu's birthday**; he was the Earl of Sandwich.	**04** The new Sam Mendes film, ***Jarhead,*** opens today. The book is a really good memoir about being a Marine in Desert Storm, so check it out in either movie or book form.	
		08 Oh no! We're flooded with ***Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, Suikoden Tactics, Karaoke Party, The Matrix: Path of Neo, Gun,*** and ***Castlevania: Curse of Darkness.*** **[NEW GAMES]**	 PlayStation 2 EyeToy Karaoke Revolution Party	**10** What a totally weird coincidence that ***Sesame Street* premiered** in 1969 on the same day as **U.S. Marine Corps Day**, which was established in 1775.	**11** Today is when that snazzy musical ***Rent*** becomes a movie for the regular folk to see. It's also **Veterans Day**, so your choice today is between bohemians and soldiers.	
13 **Whoopi Goldberg**, most famous for playing a bartender in *Star Trek: The Next Generation,* was born today. Go pour a drink for her for a change, you ungrateful bum!		**15** Live out fantasies with ***Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows, The Chronicles of Narnia, Marc Ecko's Getting Up,*** and ***Need for Speed: Most Wanted.*** **[NEW GAMES]**	 Marc Ecko's getting up contents under pressure		**18** Guess what **Mickey Mouse** is doing for his birthday? He's taking a day off from posing for pictures with you crazy kids and going to see ***Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire***.	
20 Do you totally hate clocking in your eight hours working for the man? Go back in time and assassinate William Bundy, who **patented the time-card clock today**.		**22** We hereby declare this day the biggest game day in the month of November, as behemoths ***Dragon Quest VIII*** and ***King Kong*** are unleashed. **[NEW GAMES]**		**24** Dude, **Turkey Day**. Go eat some dead birds and thank the natives for letting us chill in this country in the first place. Just be sure to loosen the belt first!	**25** Man, some really no-name movies come out today. ***The Ice Harvest***? ***Just Friends***? Whatever. Sleep off that turkey coma and go buy some cool junk that's on sale.	'Twas the night before Christmas... JOHN CUSACK BILLY BOB THORNTON CONNIE NIELSEN THE ICE HARVEST THICK THIEVES. THIN ICE.
27 Buy nothing. Seriously, today is **Buy Nothing Day**. Then again, didn't you go broke from all the shopping you did last Friday? You want to buy more? Man, you're a beast.	FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE C 99764 764628 A		**30** **Winston Churchill**, the politician who said the most awesome quotations ever in the field of international intrigue, was born today. Drink and be merry!			

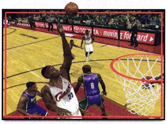


Dominate the:

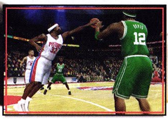
- ☐ PAINT
- ☐ BACKCOURT
- ☐ PERIMETER
- ☒ ALL OF THE ABOVE



Pull off runners, fade-aways, finger rolls and dunks with the hot new *Shot Stick.*



Set up alley-oops, give and gos, or kick it out for the open three with *Dual Player Control.*



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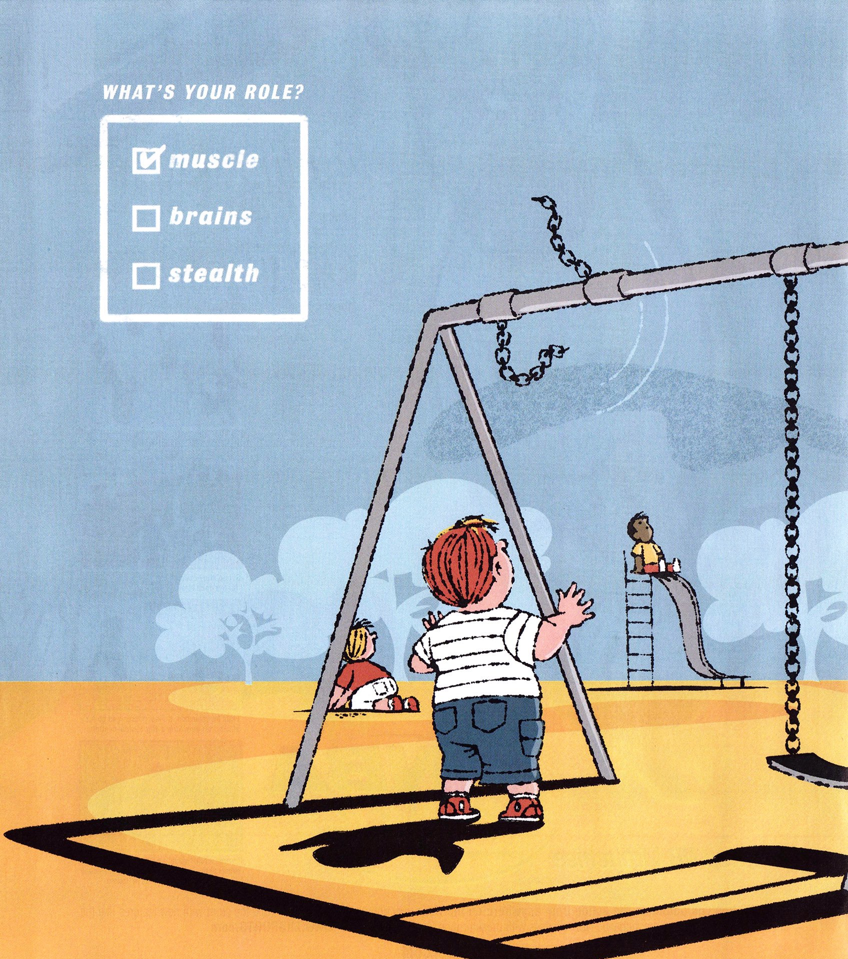

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Cartoon violence
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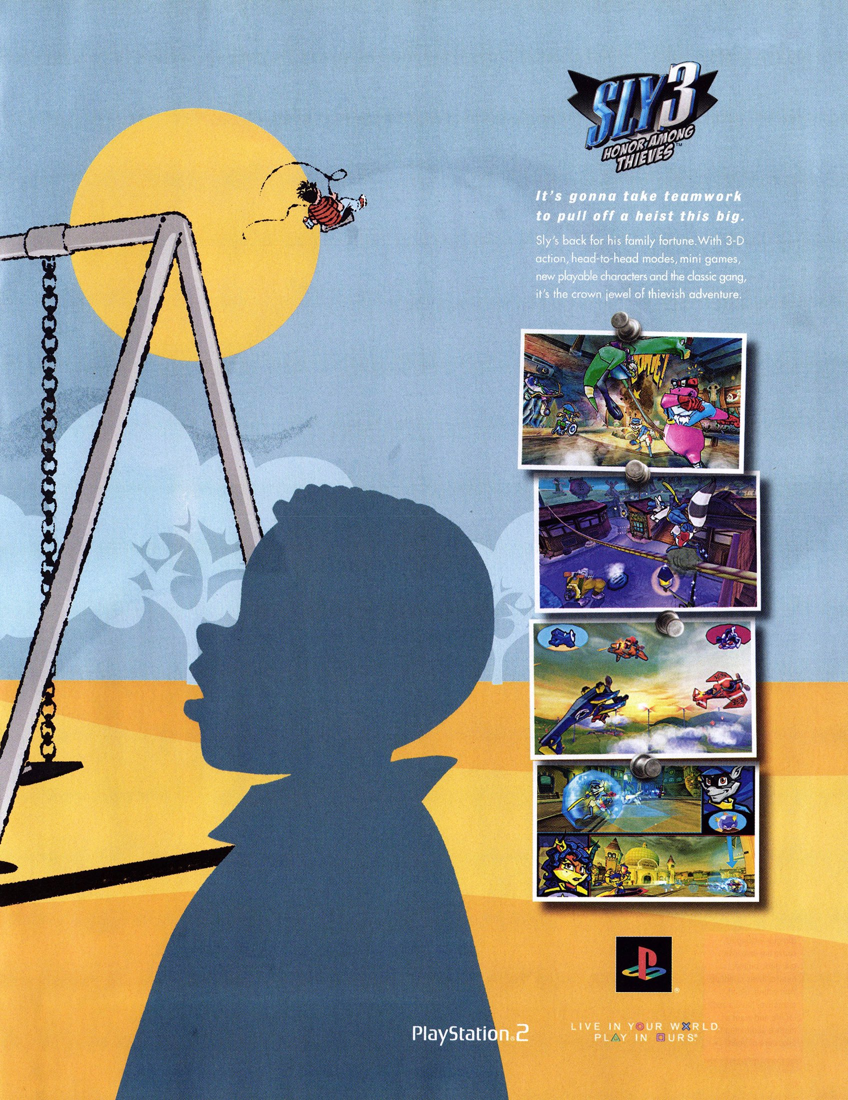
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It's gonna take teamwork to pull off a heist this big.

Sly's back for his family fortune. With 3-D action, head-to-head modes, mini games, new playable characters and the classic gang, it's the crown jewel of thievish adventure.

PlayStation®2
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Big guy looking to share big love. Me: tall, dark, enjoys nature, loves cuddling. You: young, blond, attractive, have a zest for life and want a mature gentleman to take care of you?

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

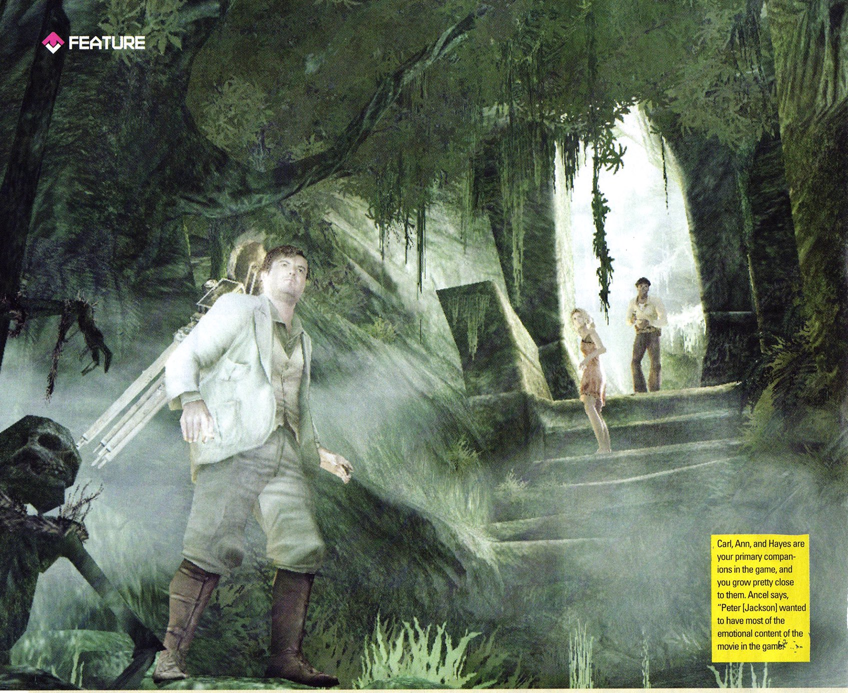
TACKLING THE TWIN MONSTERS OF A GIANT APE AND A MOVIE GAME

A word of advice: If you're ever going to a mysterious island covered with crazy overgrown vegetation and populated by prehistoric reptiles and humongous bugs, you probably don't want to call me for help.

Carl and Ann and the rest of the crew can back me up on this. They died over and over again—crushed in the jaws of a gigantic Tyrannosaurus rex, stung repeatedly by giant centipedes, strangled in the claws of a pterodactyl. And I'm sure it was of small comfort to them that I, as Jack, died twice as many times as the three of them did put together.

Although, what else could you expect in a place called Skull Island?

BY DANA JONGEWAARD



Carl, Ann, and Hayes are your primary companions in the game, and you grow pretty close to them. Ancel says, "Peter [Jackson] wanted to have most of the emotional content of the movie in the game."

A HERO COMES ALONG

On December 19, 2001, director Peter Jackson became a hero to nerds round the world for successfully committing one of the most beloved fantasy tales of all time, *The Lord of the Rings,* to celluloid. That alone was enough to cement his place in geek history.

But then he showed that he cared about videogames, too.

"When we were thinking about the *Kong* game, a lot of companies' names were talked about," says Peter Jackson. "But I was more interested in who the creative individuals would be. You don't go to movies because they were made by Warner Bros. or Fox—you go because of an actor or director. I didn't want a 'lazy' movie-based game. I thought the world of Skull Island could be a great setting for a game that goes way beyond what we could ever show in the movie—but it needed to be designed by somebody who could create layers of new content, character dynamics, and plot twists."

What happened next has already become the stuff of legend in the gaming industry: Jackson had played *Beyond Good & Evil* and loved it, he arranged to meet with Michel Ancel (the game's designer), and the two of them established a partnership to make the game. But it almost didn't happen.

"I was on holiday when the people from Ubisoft asked if I was attracted by the idea of making a game based on the movie," says Ancel. And at first, he wasn't. The reputation of movie-based games hasn't been sterling, and he wasn't interested in attaching his name to something that's often criticized as being nothing more than an extension of a film's marketing department.

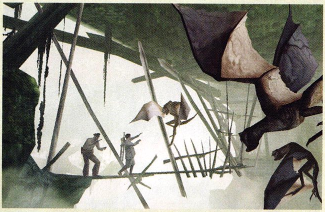
"But then I received the 10 elements that Peter Jackson wanted to have in the game," continues Ancel. "And the fact that he wanted people to play as Kong and as a human was quite an interesting challenge. When I looked over the [concept] that he had created, the artwork, and the first draft of the story, then the project looked more appealing."

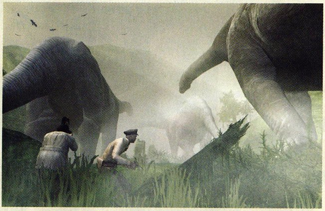
And thus began work on the game for *Peter Jackson's King Kong.*

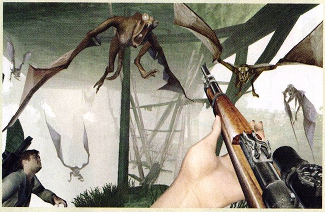
LET'S GO TO THE MOVIES

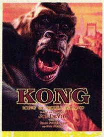
The movie begins in New York and traces the journey that rogue filmmaker Carl Denham, first mate Jack Driscoll, starlet Ann Darrow, and the crew take to Skull Island. However, the game doesn't begin until you're actually on Skull Island and King Kong has made his first appearance. Playing as Jack, you open your eyes to discover that you have been tied up as a potential sacrifice to the giant ape.

"Our concept when we started making this game was that you are in the theater watching the movie and suddenly someone takes you and puts you in the movie," explains Ancel. "And you see Skull Island, and you see King Kong, and you see Naomi Watts and Jack Black in front of you as if you were in the movie. This game has to be seen directly from the eyes of the player, and that's why we chose FPS for the human part of the game."









BEFORE AND AFTER

If the story of Kong intrigues you, then you might be interested in checking out *Kong: King of Skull Island*, by Joe DeVito and Brad Strickland. Published in 2004, the novel (which was authorized by Merian C. Cooper's estate) is both a prequel and a sequel to the events of the 1933 film. After Kong falls from the Empire State Building, both his body and Carl Denham vanish. Twenty-five years later, Carl's son treks off to Skull Island to see if he can figure out what happened to his father.

It's rather eerie how well the game accomplishes this goal. This world immerses you pretty instantaneously and doesn't let you go. This is due in part to the fact that there are no traditional cut-scenes. You're never taken out of the game to watch clips from the movie—in fact, there's no film footage at all in the game. Instead, the game has dynamic story events. This means that while there might be scripted action taking place in an area, you're still able to look and move around where you want. Neither are there any set-piece conversations. The other characters will talk to you and to each other, but you're never stuck in one place listening to someone—you're always able to move around. (The last game to portray storytelling in such a fashion was *Half-Life*, which was released back in 1998.)

One of the only obvious nods to this being a licensed movie game is the use of the voices and likenesses of the film's actors. While characters are still being refined, the ones we saw already look pretty representative of their real-life counterparts. And unlike in some movie games (we're looking at you, *Spider-Man*), the actors sound as though they are *acting* rather than just reading lines off a cue card. Jackson tells us, "The actors had a ball doing voices, especially Jack Black, who ended up totally addicted to the game!"

THE UNGAME

Cut-scenes aren't the only traditional gaming element missing. "The biggest challenge was not making *King Kong* too much like a videogame, which may sound strange," says Ancel. "When you are making a game, you are used to having scores, you are used to having a life bar, you used to having bosses and missions and things like that—you are used to having all of these things."

Not in this case, however. At first, it feels kind of disconcerting. Everyone is used to glancing at onscreen indicators with one quick dart of the eyes to the left. But there are no indicators in the game. There's no life bar to watch. There's no inventory to check. There are no health packs to stockpile. It's just you and a weapon—if you can find one.

> "THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WAS NOT MAKING IT TOO MUCH LIKE A VIDEOGAME."

But after you've gotten over the initial shock, the lack of onscreen information becomes surprisingly freeing. Instead of focusing on gauges, you're paying attention to your surroundings. You're listening for Carl's voice, you're turning your head at every rustle of foliage, you're scanning each clearing for usable items. Which is exactly what Ancel wants: "It's very important to play this game with the

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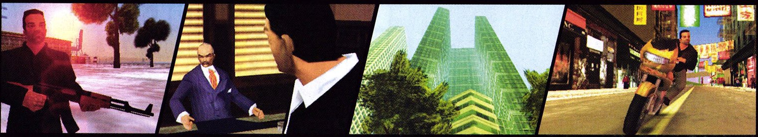

MATURE 17+

M

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- Strong Language
- Blood and Gore
- Strong Sexual Content
- Use of Drugs
- Intense Violence

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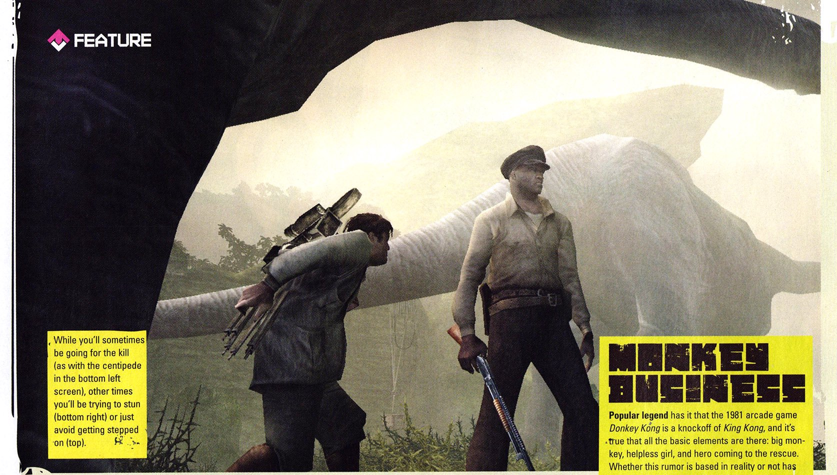
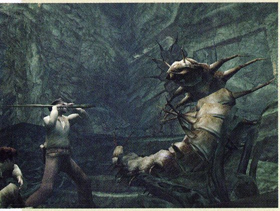
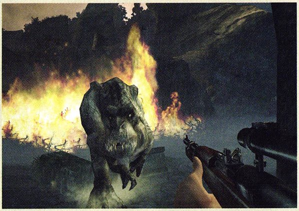


While you'll sometimes be going for the kill (as with the centipede in the bottom left screen), other times you'll be trying to stun (bottom right) or just avoid getting stepped on (top).





MONKEY BUSINESS

Popular legend has it that the 1981 arcade game *Donkey Kong* is a knockoff of *King Kong*, and it's true that all the basic elements are there: big monkey, helpless girl, and hero coming to the rescue. Whether this rumor is based in reality or not has never been firmly established, but when the game first came out, movie studio MCA Universal saw the similarities, too. They filed suit against Nintendo (claiming copyright infringement), insisting that all profits from the game be signed over to MCA and that unsold copies be destroyed. After a legal battle, the courts decided that the story of *King Kong* was public domain and that MCA Universal had to pay Nintendo damages valued at $1.8 million.

Donkey Kong proved to be one of Nintendo's most enduring properties, and games based on the license are still being published today. Ironically, the first *King Kong* game, which was released by Tigervision for the Atari 2600 in 1982, is actually a knockoff of *Donkey Kong*.

sound—I'd say the sound is more than 50 percent of the immersion."

There is no bottomless inventory. In fact, you don't even start off with a weapon—instead, you're scavenging from the environment. There will often be groupings of spears thrust into the ground, and sometimes you'll find crates containing guns and ammunition suspended in the air from ropes—presumably stockpiles that your crew put in place in case of emergency.

"We really wanted the experience to be very immersive," says Ancel. "The movie and the atmosphere of the story are very wide and primal, and any technical life bar [in the game] would remove you. The fact that you are looking around, that you can pick up a piece of food or a piece of wood and use it as a weapon, [the experience is] very concrete."

Other traditional gaming elements that you won't see: save points and difficulty levels. Saves happen organically, which can at times be frustrating—you don't know how far you're getting set back until you actually die. None of the save points seemed set terribly far apart, though, so it was never a major issue. And there is just one difficulty level for the game, though the game will adjust how hard a segment is if you are having problems. Say, for example, that you die in a raptor attack several times; after the third or fourth death, the game will automatically accommodate you by sending in fewer raptors to battle against.

There is the option to add a couple of traditional elements back. In the preview build we played, you could choose to have an aiming axis (which is a tiny plus sign that turns red when your aim crosses over a target) and an onscreen inventory (which isn't really needed since you can carry only one weapon at a time anyway).

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW

Traditional gaming conventions may be out the window, but that doesn't mean you'll have no indicators as to what's going on. You'll be able to tell your health state by both visual and audio cues: When you take a hit, your vision turns red and the music becomes slower and shifts to a minor key. If you're at critical status, your vision dims and the music modulates to a celestial tone (presumably because you're about to go live with the angels). There aren't any health packs to heal you, but if you get a little time to recuperate, that will fix you up as good as new.

"ANY TECHNICAL LIFE BAR WOULD REMOVE YOU FROM THE GAME."

In the same vein, while ammo conservation is important, running out doesn't necessarily mean you're done for. "Remember the food

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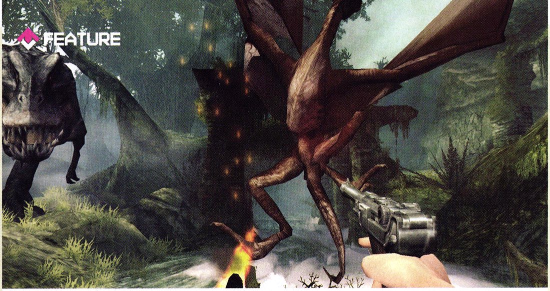

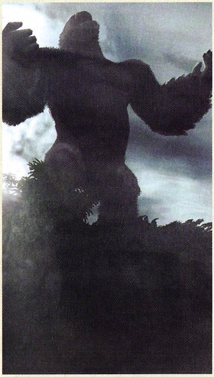

POSSIBLE SPOILERS

The problem with advance peeks at movie games is that movie studios don't like developers to show too much because they're worried the film will be ruined. This means that, as of press time, no one has seen anything (even a screenshot) past the trek across Skull Island. Here are predictions for events that will come later in the game. Guesses are based on the plot of the 1933 film, which is the source material for this movie.

BOMBS AWAY

After Jack rescues Ann, King Kong chases after her, ending up back at the village. As Jack, you will have to help your crew stun Kong with gas bombs in order to drug him long enough to tie him to a raft to tow back across the ocean to New York.

BORN TO BE FREE

When the company returns to New York, Kong is put on display to the public. As Kong, you will have to break free from your chains and fight your way out of the exhibition hall and onto the streets of New York.

STEALING BEAUTY

Once Kong escapes, Jack and Ann run to Jack's hotel and hide out in his room. As Kong, you will have to find Ann, reach through the hotel window and take her, and then climb the buildings of New York, ending on top of the Empire State Building.

FLYING HIGH

Kong is sitting on top of the Empire State Building with Ann as his prisoner, fending off all attackers. As Jack, you will have to fly in and shoot him off of the building, without hurting Ann in the process.

chain," I am reminded when my bullets are spent. A search of the area reveals a pile of sticks; grabbing one, I use it to stab one of the gigantic grubs squirming around on the ground. This time, when I approach the enclave filled with bats, I toss the grub-kabob into their midst; the pterodactyls descend on it, giving me a chance to rush through without being noticed.

That fight for survival is what the first-person portion of the game is about. It doesn't always matter whether you kill the beasts or not—sometimes evasion is the best tactic. Which, let's be honest, if you were faced with a pack of raptors, you'd probably rather avoid them than take them on single-handedly.

MADE INTO A MONKEY

While Kong's presence looms over the game, he's actually not around all that much in the first portion of it. Playing from the first-person viewpoint as Jack comprises the majority of the game, but what most people want to know about is playing as Kong. Being Kong was something Jackson was adamant about, but Ancel confesses that he might not have made the same decision. "I'm not sure that we would have [had people play as] Kong," he says. "I must admit that it's a very good idea, but when you're playing on the human side and playing as Kong, too, it's quite hard to imagine [playing as the other side] because there is such a feeling that they are just opposites, you know? And that's one of the real assets, because they have to survive, and Ann, they are protecting Ann—both human and King Kong. But I think that I would have not been playing as Kong."

When playing as Kong, the main feeling the team wants to impart to gamers is one of power. This means that while there are certain platformer-type elements, you don't need to worry about falling, as Ancel felt that it would be "un-Kong-like." All of the jumps and swings are automated—you have to press a button to make the leap, but it is impossible to miss your target.

> "I'M NOT SURE THAT WE WOULD HAVE HAD PEOPLE PLAY AS KONG."

As Kong, you get to tackle all the huge creatures that as Jack you must avoid. It's a nice contrast to go from being such a small, puny creature to something big and powerful. The moves are all pretty simple—this isn't fighting in the vein of *Soul Calibur* or *Virtua Fighter*—but the onscreen action is impressive as you swing punches and knock T-Rexes to the ground.

But enough of us telling you about it. Turn the page and find out about playing it for yourself on the demo.

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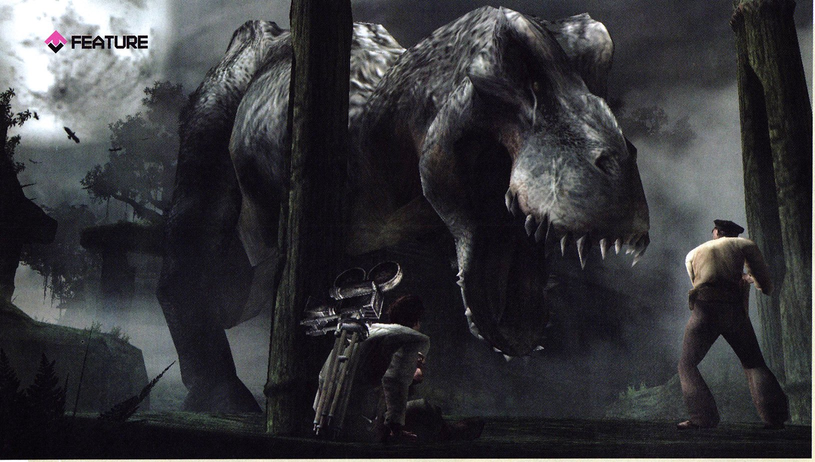
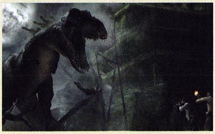




MAMMALIAN REPTILES

In all honesty, those swooping creatures in this part of the level aren't exactly pterodactyls (their faces aren't pointy enough), but neither are they bats (because they don't have snub noses nor fur). As most of the other beasts on Skull Island appear to be some form of dinosaur, however, we opted to call them pterodactyls just to have a consistent theme.

ARE YOU A MAN...

In the first level of the demo, you play as Jack. It's early in the game: You've just saved Carl from the clutches of a pterodactyl and you're meeting back up with the rest of the crew. While you are moving ahead, you'll hear a call out from a bridge. (This gives you a chance to see what Ancel and his team are trying to achieve by having dynamic story events rather than cut-scenes.) The men will be holding their conversation, but all during it, you're free to look around and move away from them. Which you should do, unless you want to get caught by the T-Rex. Head to the left and run into the clearing. You're going to have to distract the T-Rex so that Carl and his buddy can open the door all of you can escape through.

The best way to distract big animals is with smaller animals. You can offer up yourself, but that means you'll be killed and the game will be over. So if you like playing games for reasons other than dying, look for smaller animals (in this case, the circling pterodactyls) with which to distract the T-Rex.

Wait until the T-Rex has broken through the archway and then get his attention by shooting at him. Using the stone archways as protection, dodge and take out one of the pterodactyls. He'll be momentarily distracted as he munches it up. While he's munching, run over to the other side—you'll need to keep him distracted continuously if your pals are going to have a chance of opening the door. From the other side of the clearing, throw a spear or shoot him, then repeat the process. If you stretch this out to the optimum length of time and keep the T-Rex continuously distracted, your friends should have enough time to open the door. They'll shout at you once it's open, at which point you should run like hell to get through it. Retreat into the water and turn back to stare at the T-Rex's jaws to complete this level.

CAN YOU...

- Do a belly flop on top of a T-Rex?
- Bite and snap the neck of a raptor?
- Crack a T-Rex's jaw in half?
- Slam a T-Rex against the wall?
- Fling raptors off the edge of a cliff?
- Knock one T-Rex into the other T-Rex?

...OR ARE YOU A BEAST?

In the second level of the demo, you get to play as King Kong. Right before this point, you've been playing as Jack, who is floating down the river on a raft with his crewmates, trying to escape from T-Rexes. At this point, the game shifts to having you play as Kong, where you'll be taking on a single T-Rex.

The first thing you need to do is put down Ann by pressing Circle, as you can't fight when you're holding her. Then it's time to take on the T-Rex. The basic controls are very simple: Square lets you jump and dodge, Circle is the grab, X is the punch, and Triangle pushes enemies back. However, each key has secondary functions, too; play around to figure them out. For example, if you press Triangle while standing away from enemies, Kong beats his chest, which increases the power of his next hit.

Ann ran away while you were in the middle of fighting, so after you've defeated the T-Rex, you need to look for her. Press Circle rapidly to move the pillar at the back of the area and then break through the gate behind it. From here, move forward, pressing Square to grab onto pillars and jump over to opposite walls when necessary. It's impossible to fall, so there's no need for precision. Eventually, you'll land in a clearing occupied by several raptors. These guys are pretty little and it's easy to dispatch them quickly. After they're all dead, break through this gate and do a bit more jumping.

This will bring you face-to-face with two T-Rexes who are preparing to munch on Ann. Use the strategies you figured out against the first T-Rex to take both of these guys down as well. Though it's difficult to fight them simultaneously, you need to be sure you keep them away from Ann—if she dies, you lose. Once you've defeated both of the T-Rexes, the level is complete.

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

FRENCH DEVELOPER MICHEL ANCEL TAKES ON AN AMERICAN ICON

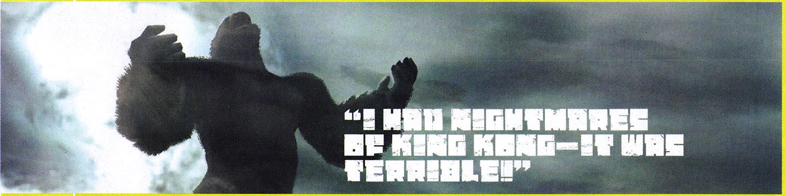
Michel Ancel, creative director of *Peter Jackson's King Kong,* pries open the jaws of Xavier Poix, the game's producer.

Michel Ancel makes a good argument for dropping out: At 16, he left school to make videogames, got hired by Ubisoft, and shortly thereafter created Rayman. Now, 10 years later, he's working with Peter Jackson to create one of the most high-profile movie games ever, *Peter Jackson's King Kong.* We talked with Michel about childhood nightmares, why sequels are important, and what it feels like to have the world watching you.

OPM You said you saw *King Kong* as a child and liked it. Was it a story that stuck with you, or did you forget it as you got older?
MICHEL ANCEL No, no! I had nightmares of King Kong—it was terrible! The biggest nightmare was he was in the city, and I was sleeping, and he reached through the window, and I tried to escape, and he was as big as trees and things like that. And I had this nightmare for years—until yesterday! [*Laughs*]

No, but I think King Kong is very interesting—he's a monster, and in some ways you could cry at the end because he is dying. You don't [always] choose to have these emotions about monsters. It's like *Beauty and the Beast*, the kind of story that when you are a child, you don't always understand all the areas behind the story, but it makes you think about it.

OPM With *Beyond Good & Evil*, you were able to work under the radar and do what you wanted. With this project, the public scrutiny is much higher and there are a lot more people involved. Has this affected how you develop the game?
MA Yes. I've tried to make my [previous] games in a way that people will understand and enjoy. But people imagine something when they think about King Kong. When I was a child and saw *King Kong*, I was very touched by the movie. And that's interesting to answer all these expectations and to understand them. [This game could] potentially [be played by] thousands or millions of people. You know they are waiting for you and are anxious about what you chose to do to make it.



"I HAD NIGHTMARES OF KING KONG—IT WAS TERRIBLE!"

OPM Were there any other movie games that you looked to as an example while making this game, either as an example of how to do it right or how to do it wrong?
MA Yes—I think that the *Lord of the Rings* games from Electronic Arts are technologically impressive. We had to avoid, of course, some repetitive aspect that you could have, because [*King Kong*] was developed in a short time; it is hard to have hours and hours of gameplay when your development time is quite small. We didn't want to be a copy of any of those games, so we had to advance a new kind of content.

OPM Would you make a game based on a movie license again?
MA Why not? It's a way of having another point of view, an artistic base—you're not starting from zero. You have material to think about before you start. Sometimes when you have to imagine the world—the people, the story, the gameplay—it's quite interesting, but it's quite hard, too. I think it's interesting to move from the creation then to adaptation and then come back to creation.

OPM So which movie would you pick if you had your choice?
MA [*Laughs*] That's a good question. There've been many games based on *Blade Runner*, but when I was a teen, I really enjoyed this world—it's incredible. And I like the fact that there are some poetic elements in *Blade Runner*. I know there have been games based on this world, but I think that there are still things to do [with it].

OPM You mentioned that developers often make sequels because it's a place for them to start from. And also, from a money standpoint, it can be more financially sound. But do you think there will be any backlash in the industry from the proliferation of sequels?
MA I don't think so. You have sequels that can be very good, and, of course, sequels can be very bad. I think when you take the same elements and just modify them and this becomes your new game, that this is not good. But if you take a game like *Zelda*, it just gets better and better. And when you see *Metal Gear Solid*, those games are different—the earth is the same, but the characters and the story are different. You have some very good game creators, and I think that the quality of the name and the use of technology to innovate...you don't have to make everything new because [it takes] too much time.

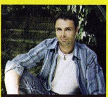
OPM You referred to *Zelda* and *Metal Gear Solid*; one reason those series do so well is that they keep innovating how the game is played. What do you think the industry can do to keep encouraging developers along that path?
MA I think that videogames have a history, and because of that history, you have some elements that aren't changing very fast when you consider that most of the games were first played in [an arcade] and you had to pay for them...then you have scores, you have lives, and you have collectible things. But sometimes it's possible to remove those elements to imagine another way of being, to forget these things sometimes and try and imagine something new. [It's important] to work in this direction, to try and think more when making a game about other major creative pieces—like how the story is told in movies or in books—[in order] to introduce a new way of thinking in games.

OPM What games do you think have done a good job of pushing the boundaries of game design as of late?
MA I think that *World of WarCraft*, for example...these kinds of games are collecting new people and [arousing interest in] new gamers. Games overall from PlayStation 1 to PlayStation 2 have created a new way of playing. Now there is more mature content. Games like *Metal Gear Solid* are bringing something different to the market. And there are football games, which are very realistic, and a lot of fans are playing soccer. *Grand Theft Auto* is another game that is also pushing the way we are thinking about games. I have respect for popular games like this because it's not just about the content—it's the way you are playing, it's the freedom you give to the player.

OPM What have been some of your favorite games?
MA I know it's not original to say it, but I've been very touched by *Ico* because it is a very, very good mix of gameplay and storytelling. It's such a perfect mix of simple elements that create very strong emotions. I like the fact that emotions can come from other things other than just big fireworks, big explosions, big visual effects.

I also really had a lot of fun with *Crash Bandicoot*—the first one on PlayStation 1. It was really fun [to play it with my son].

OPM Thank you so much for talking with us, Michel.
MA Thank you. «



DEVELOPER RESUME

Peter Jackson's King Kong (2005)
Creative Director
Beyond Good & Evil (2003)
Producer, Creative Director
Rayman 2: The Great Escape (1999)
Producer, Creative Director
Rayman (1995)
Concept Creator

There's a lot more than we could fit here! Go to opm.1UP.com to read our interview with Peter Jackson, the full conversation with Michel Ancel, and a history of big monkeys on the big screen.

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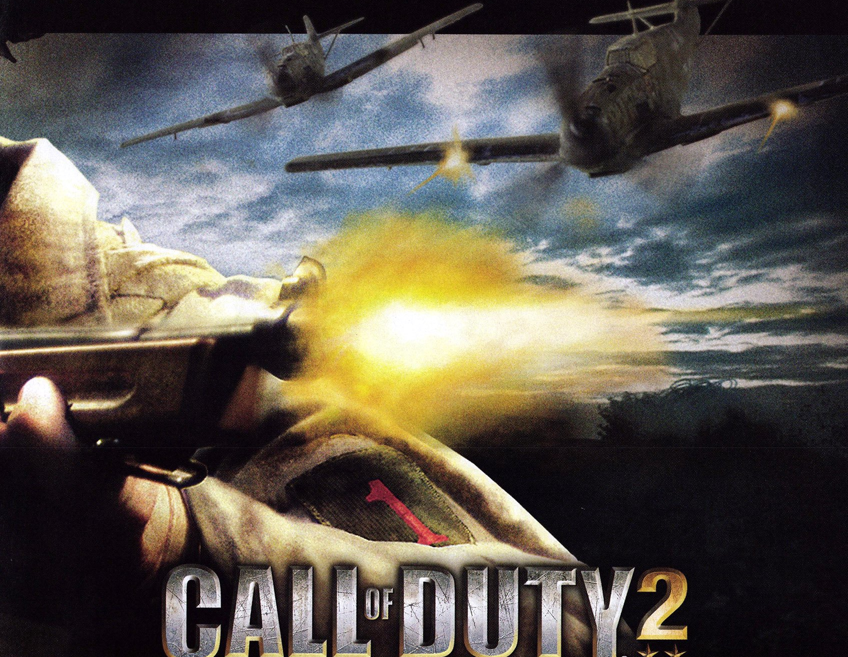
LEGENDS IN MILITARY HISTORY.”

– *PlayStation World*



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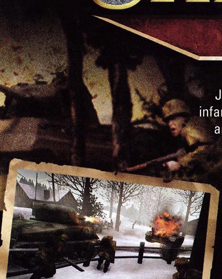

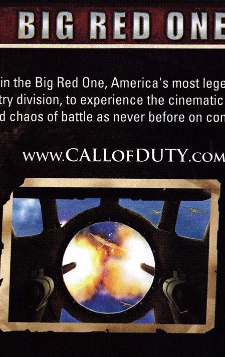

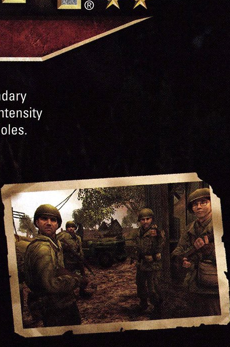

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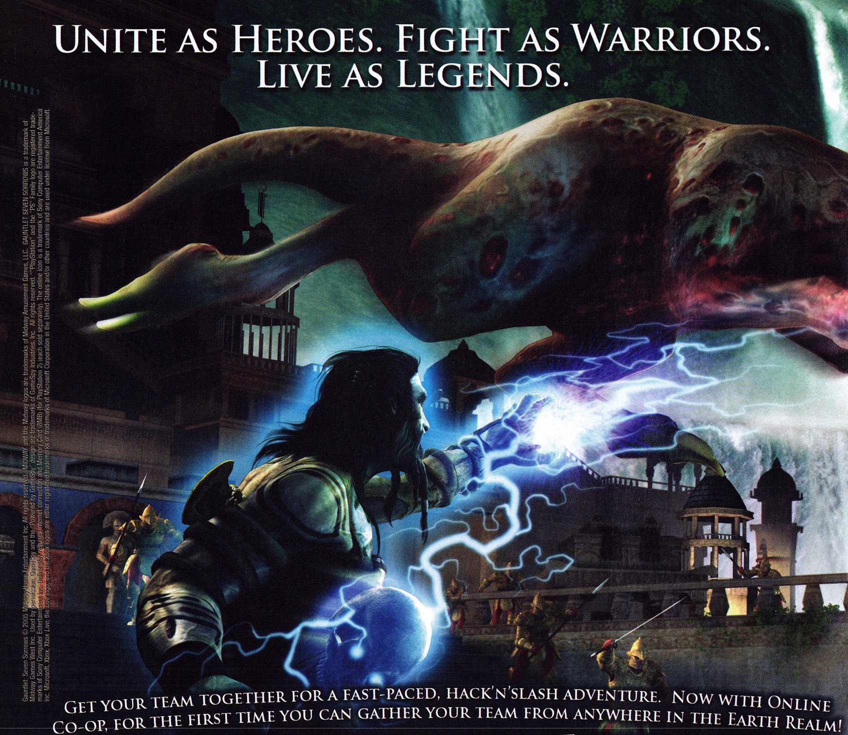

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METAL GEAR 3: SUBSISTENCE

OMG OPM VS. NOOBZ IN MGS: ONE EDITOR'S REPORT

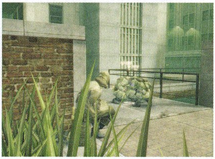
No impression or demonstration of a game is as good as actually playing it; this is especially true for multiplayer aspects that require you to play against actual people. So instead of merely offering a demo of *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence*'s online mode, Kojima and his team actually hosted a *Subsistence* tournament at the Tokyo Game Show. Team Ziff, consisting of Kimi Matsuzaki (1UP community manager), Shane Bettenhausen (*EGM* previews editor), Mark MacDonald (*EGM* executive editor), and myself (*OPM* previews editor Scooter), was set to play against Japanese gamers who hadn't seen the game before TGS. If we could win this first round, we would then play against a Japanese gaming magazine (most likely *Famitsu*) for the championship.

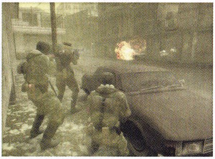
We did a practice round to get to know the map a little and refamiliarize ourselves with *MGS*'s weapons and control scheme (even with the snazzy third-person camera, the controls themselves are different enough from other shooters that a few minutes of *MGS3* play time are needed in order to not completely suck). We figured out that the shotgun is good for quickly knocking people down and delivers good oomph but is a bit on the slow side, while the Skorpion submachine gun fires rapidly but consequently runs out of bullets quickly. After tinkering with the weapons and items, we ended up favoring either the reliable AK-47 or the XM16 rifle (both do decent damage, fire rapidly, and last longer per clip than the Skorpion), stun grenades (a good area-effect blinding weapon), white phosphorous grenades (lighting enemies on fire prevents them from doing stuff like picking up the objective), porno mags, and claymores.

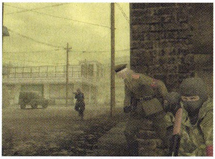
> WE WERE CALLED ONSTAGE, AND KOJIMA WISHED US GOOD LUCK.

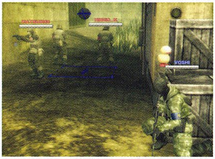
Then we set up our basic plan: Kimi and I were on sabotage duty while Shane and Mark were on continual offense. This meant that Kimi was to lay down porn mags while I set down claymore mines—a couple at the enemy base and the last few in the grassy patches. That way, if the enemy team was returning the kerotan (the frog toy from *MGS3: Snake Eater* and the objective for this map), the mines

Go, Team America! Pictured from right to left are Ziff Davis contestants Thierry Nguyen, Shane Bettenhausen, and Mark McDonald.







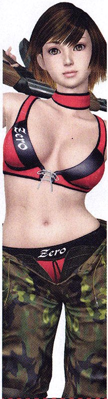


and the porn mags near their base would slow them down enough for us to grab the kerotan. Additionally, the grass hides the magazines and the mines, so as long as we avoided the grass ourselves, we'd be fine. Once Kimi and I were done mining the grass and the enemy base, we would then join Mark and Shane on offense. After getting our plan figured out, we were called onstage, and Kojima wished us good luck.

It felt like a pretty damn flawless plan until we actually started playing. Actually, we did our jobs pretty smoothly, as Kimi and I made the grassy areas dangerous to navigate (we heard quite a few explosions due to mines and enthralled soldiers due to the porn mags) while Shane and Mark did a good job of heading for the kerotan and grabbing it. After a bit of back-and-forth, we even captured the kerotan and guarded it pretty well. I mined one path to the capture point, personally guarded the other path, and, when the going got tough, threw stun grenades so that no one could see where the kerotan was before trying to grab it. In fact, we held it for 18 out of the necessary 20 seconds before the other team broke through and held on to the kerotan for 20 seconds, earning much glory for the Land of the Rising Sun and setting off much mockery of us *gaijin* players.

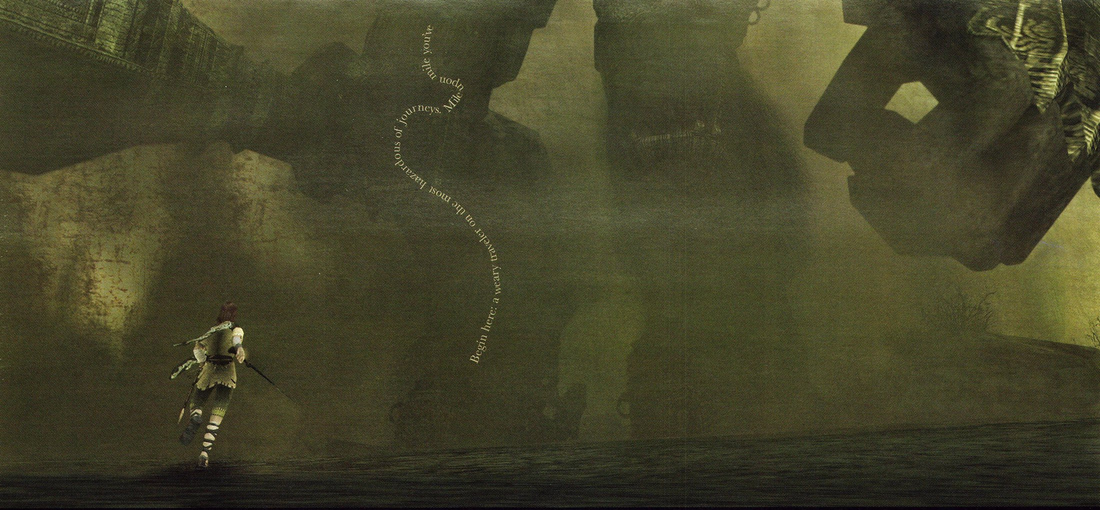
The other team was able to snatch our victory and hold on to it by taking advantage of our tactics of splitting up and regrouping later. They stayed completely united the whole time. Therefore, many situations ended up being four of them versus one or maybe two of us. Even when one of them got caught looking at a porn mag or tripped a claymore, the other three were there to back him up. Instead of all four of us going for the flag, Kimi and I went back to mining the map, leaving all of us scattered. Later in the day, a Kojima Productions rep told us that the team we lost against ended up winning the entire tournament (and the prize, which was a plaque signed by Kojima and a white PSP for each team member).

Perhaps we were overconfident; perhaps we should have adapted faster and stuck together like they did. Maybe the spectacle of the all-Japanese crowd unnerved us. Or maybe it was a bad idea to take on the Japanese on their home turf. Regardless, we learned a valuable lesson from playing *Subsistence* online: The Japanese really like their *Metal Gear Solid* games. «



RUMBLING ROSE

None of us were good enough to be able to play as special characters, but we were told about them and their abilities. Sokolov has a cloaking device, Raikov pulls off crotch grabs, and Ocelot has trick shots. Reiko from *Rumble Roses* also makes an appearance and does a snazzy suplex.


Begin here: a weary traveler on the most hazardous of journeys. Mile upon mile you've

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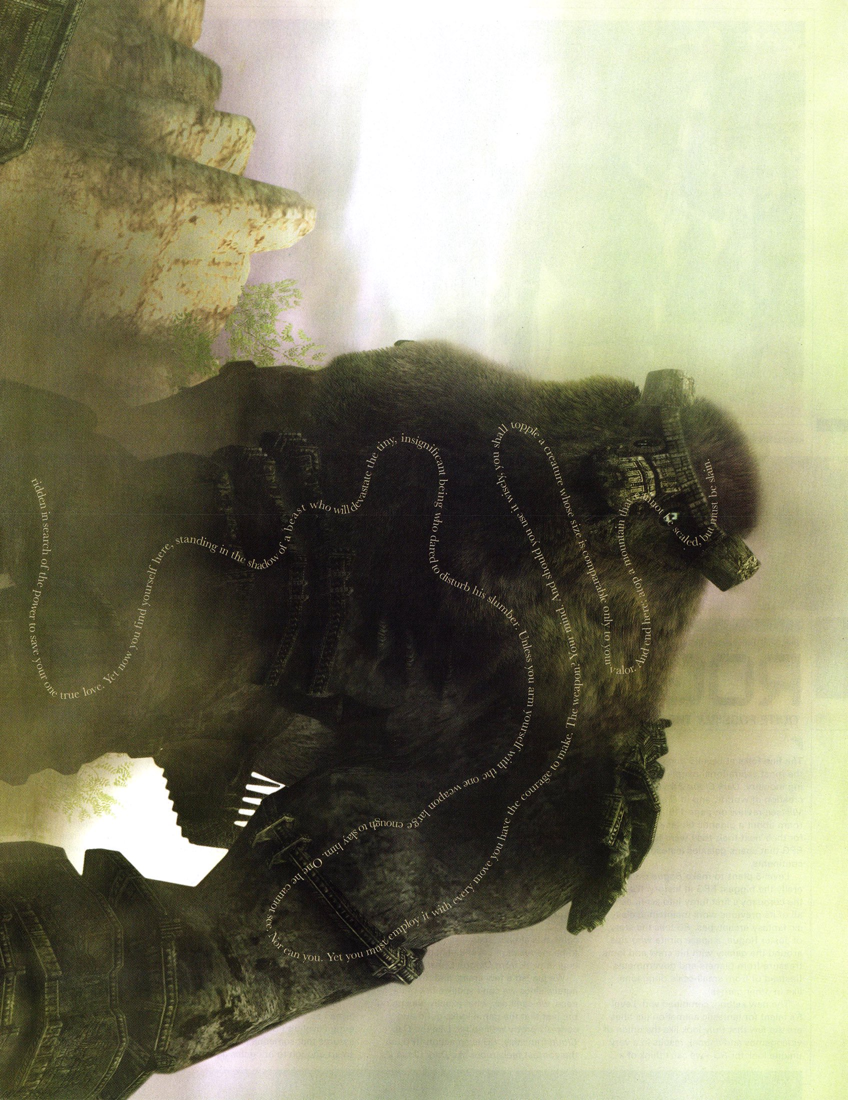
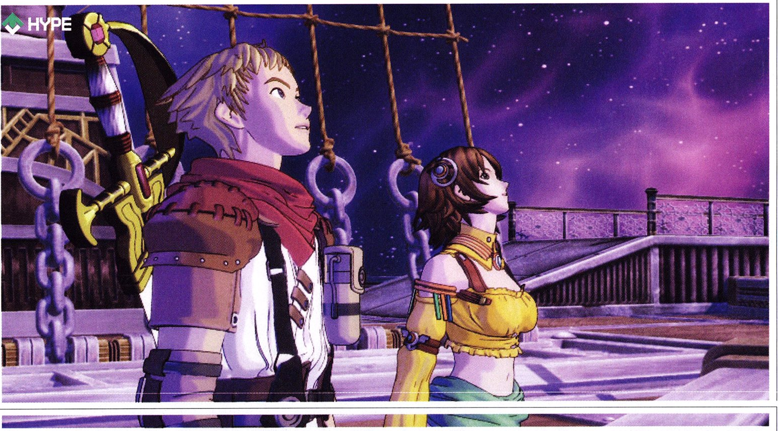
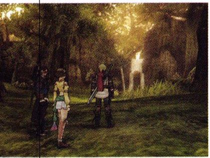
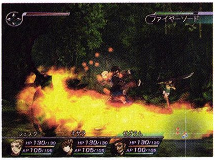
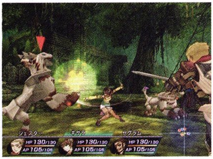


ridden in search of the power to save your one true love. Yet now you find yourself here, standing in the shadow of a beast who will devastate the tiny, insignificant being who dared to disturb his slumber. Unless you arm yourself with the one weapon large enough to slay him. One he cannot see. Nor can you. Yet you must employ it with every move you have the courage to make. The weapon? Your mind. And should you use it wisely, you shall topple a creature whose size is comparable only to your valor. And end here, atop a mountain that cannot be scaled, but must be slain.









Pub. SCEI **Dev.** Level-5 **Release** December (in Japan)

ROGUE GALAXY

QUITE POSSIBLY THE BIGGEST RPG IN THE UNIVERSE

The fine folks at Level-5 might be some of the most aspirational people in the gaming industry. *Dark Cloud 2* involves the creation of worlds, and in *Dragon Quest VIII* (see review on page 116) you can roam about a gigantic fantasy world. Now for their next trick, they want to make an RPG that spans galaxies instead of mere continents.

Level-5 plans to make *Rogue Galaxy* literally the biggest RPG in history. It's also the company's first foray into sci-fi, as all of its previous work maintained classic fantasy archetypes. *RG* tells the story of Jester Rogue, a space pirate who zips around the galaxy with his crew and loots treasure from planets and governments (instead of from small-scale dungeons, like in other games).

The new setting, combined with Level-5's talent for fantastic animation (its titles are the few that truly look like the union of videogames and anime), results in a very unique look for *RG*—we can't think of a cel-shaded sci-fi game that looks as good as *RG* does right now. The game spans multiple planets, and so in our playtest, we fiddled around in environments such as a modern city, some jungle ruins, and a mountain that belongs in a fantasy game. In all of these environments, there is no loading (going from towns to woods to combat is already seamless), which seems to be the result of Level-5 enhancing its engine work from *Dragon Quest VIII*.

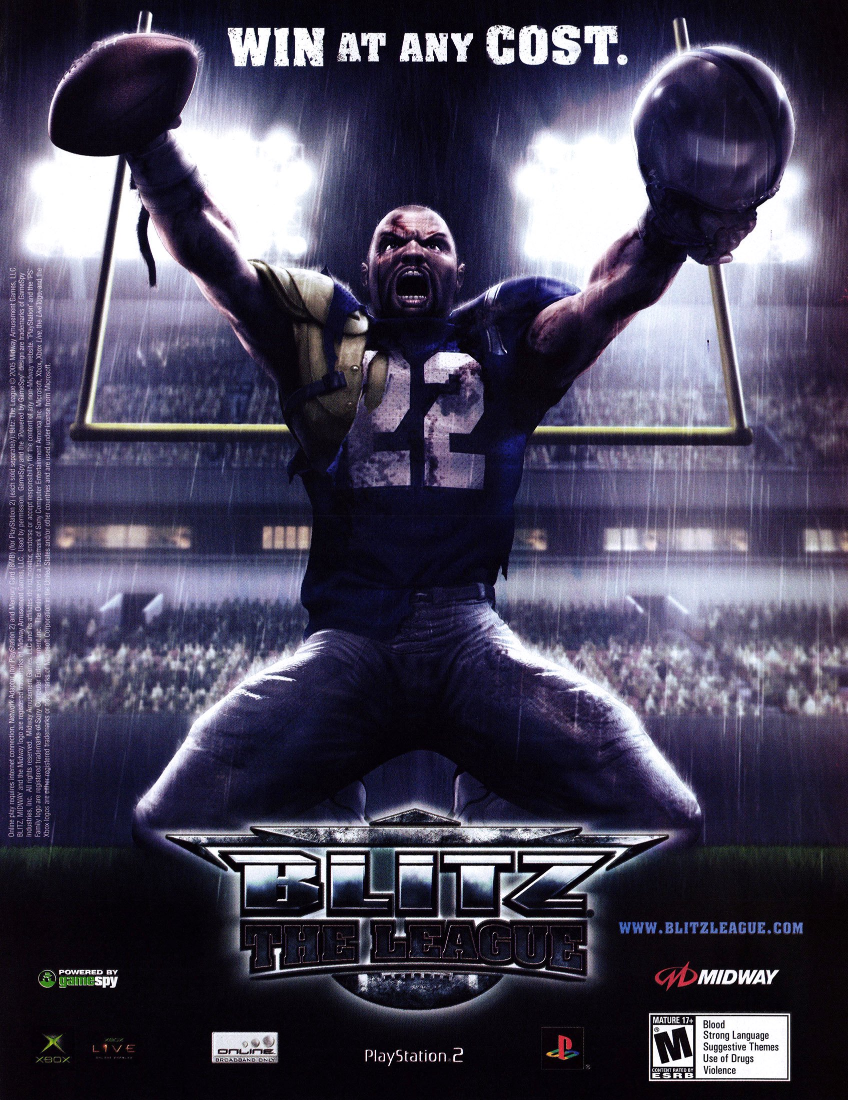
We played a few areas, and unfortunately, since we can't speak a lick of Japanese, we can't say what exactly was going on, just that the game looks good and controls pretty well so far. Like the *Dark Cloud* franchise, *RG* is an action-RPG, so the combat feels more like *Dark Cloud 2*'s and *Kingdom Hearts*' and less like *Final Fantasy*'s or *Dragon Quest*'s. Battles are random, but there's no transition—you're given a visual warning and the monsters simply wander in from the environment. You control only Jester, but you can issue orders to the rest of your party members when you pause combat, and occasionally, you can try to pull off special moves or spells (or whatever they're called) by hitting L1 or R1 when indicated. As a result, combat feels fast, but not too actiony or overwhelming.

Rogue Galaxy hasn't been officially confirmed as coming to the States, but considering Level-5's PS2 pedigree, we'll safely assume that someone at Sony will be smart enough to bring this game over. «

> ROGUE GALAXY MIGHT LITERALLY BE THE BIGGEST RPG IN HISTORY...

SORTING THE FACTORS

Here's a quick guide for talking to like-minded gaming fellows about *Rogue Galaxy*: Factor 5 is a developer that's made numerous *Star Wars* games, including *Rogue Leader* and *Rogue Squadron*. The similarly named Level-5 worked on the *Dark Cloud* franchise and *Dragon Quest VIII*. *Rogue Galaxy* is not the next *Star Wars* game, and we're assuming Factor 5's *Lair* is not a cel-shaded RPG. Each developer still uses "5" in its name. In summary: Level-5 is *Rogue Galaxy*, not *Lair*, Factor 5 is *Lair*, not *Rogue Galaxy*.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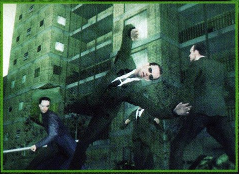

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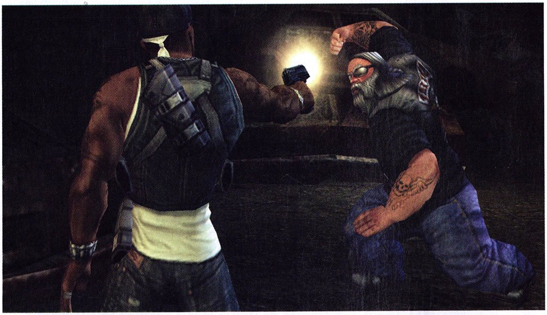
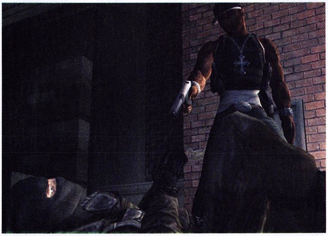
gangland

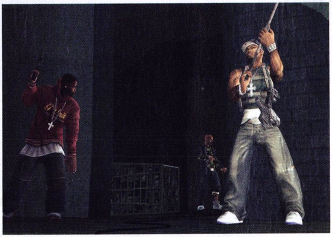
IS THE WEST TRULY THE BEST?

The gaming industry is trying to make itself hipper and hoppier by releasing a multitude of urban-themed titles featuring rappers and/or gang crime. While American and European developers have been producing urban-themed games for some time, only recently have Japanese developers started getting in on the trend with titles like *Urban Reign* and *Beatdown*.

The following two games stand out because they're examples of how different cultures tackle the subject of gang crime in their respective regions. These titles reflect not only the urban gang culture in the region each one comes from, but also the design philosophies of an Eastern developer like Amusement Vision versus a Western one like Genuine Games. We've seen Tupac versus Biggie, Nas versus Jay-Z, Kool Moe Dee versus LL Cool J—and now Sega versus Vivendi.







DIE TRYING
Unfortunately, *50 Cent: Bulletproof* has no ties to 50 Cent's thespian debut, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. The game comes out around the same time as the movie, but both items have completely independent stories. However, the game does showcase a set of exclusive tracks not found anywhere else.

Pub. Vivendi Universal Games **Dev.** Genuine Games **Release** November

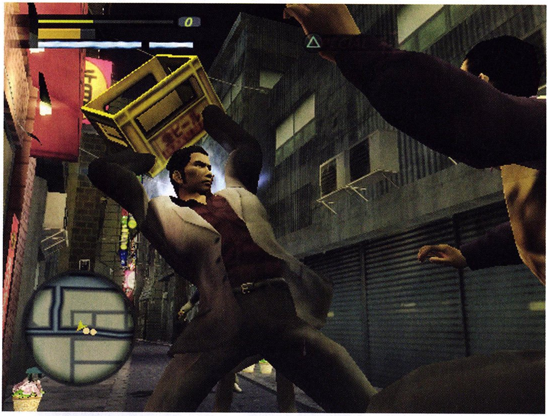
50 CENT: BULLETPROOF

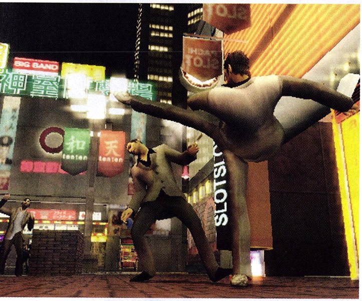
SOCOM WITH RAPPERS

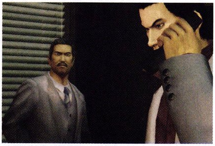
We know what you're thinking: It's a game with 50 Cent as the lead character—an obvious ploy to cash in on a character likeness rather than a serious attempt at making a game. But surprisingly, this really isn't the case with *Bulletproof*. In fact, we were pleasantly surprised to see that the game's third-person shooting mechanics were addressed with great care, almost to the extent that you would think *Bulletproof* is attempting to take on *SOCOM* or other similar third-person shooters.

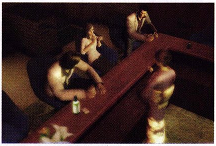
OK, well, maybe it's not that much of a simulation in that respect, but everything from the AI to the way the controls function with the two different camera settings are features that other games could learn from. Speaking of the AI, enemies in the game actually know how to use cover. Yes, it's true. They won't simply run right out into the middle of the street and hope that 50 and his crew won't shoot them up. Instead, they'll hide behind cars and other barriers and take shots at the most opportune moment. Plus, there are actually multiple ways to approach a gunfight, so you can survey the area and find out if you can get any sort of tactical advantage.

That's kind of why you need to rely on the other members of your gang, otherwise known as G-Unit, in order to take out these enemies and find out who shot 50 up. Each of your three team members has special abilities that come in handy during a heated gunfight. One can pick locks while another can carry two guns at once, making him handy when you're outnumbered. Plus, you'll get some help from Dr. Dre (who plays a weapons specialist) and Eminem (in the role of a crooked cop).









Pub. Sega **Dev.** Amusement Vision **Release** Not confirmed for the States...yet

RYU GA GOTOKU

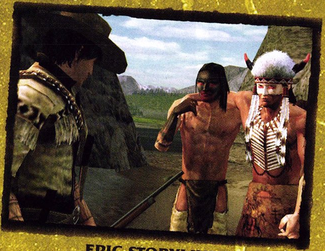
SHENMUE WITH YAKUZA

It seems that the fine purveyors of *Monkey Ball*–based entertainment at Amusement Vision (a development team within Sega) got a bit tired of family fare, as its next title is entering *Grand Theft Auto* territory. *Ryu ga Gotoku* (rough translation: "like a dragon") is a game not about monkeys, but a Japanese gangster. It's also a game that integrates free roaming, brawling, gambling, batting practice (!), and hostess seducing.

Similar to Sega's earlier franchise *Shenmue* (and, to some extent, *GTA*), *Ryu ga Gotoku* features a free-roaming map of the fictional Kamurocho district in Tokyo (seemingly by one of Tokyo's red-light districts, Kabukicho). You'll be able to accept side quests, gamble in pachinko parlors, and get sauced in bars. There's even a hostess bar in which you can pick a girl and ply her with cheap talk and expensive drinks. As expected, playing a yakuza in a rough part of Japan usually leads to fighting. The fighting system isn't taken from *Virtua Fighter*; it's designed to simulate the harsh brawls that gangsters get into. Don't look for elaborate combos that resemble ballet, but expect to see techniques like stomping on someone when they hit the ground, picking up garbage cans to pummel people with, or smashing your opponent's face against a radiator.

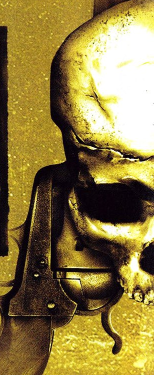
We don't have a whole lot of details about the story, just that you play as Kiryu Kazuma, a lifer in the yakuza just released from prison. Kazuma wants to leave the yakuza life behind, but then again, there wouldn't be much of a game if he retired to a nice place in the hills. No American release has been confirmed, but we'd put our pachinko money on Sega bringing this sprawling yakuza epic over to the States.

EXPERIENCE THE BRUTAL



EPIC STORYLINE

MASSIVE STREAMING WORLD



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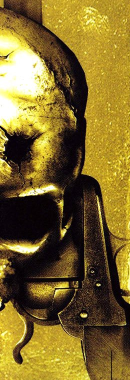
ITY THAT WAS THE WEST



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PlayStation 2

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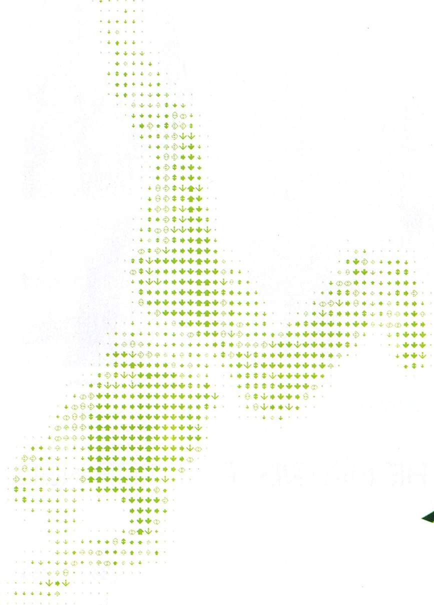
PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system (sold separately). Online play requires internet connection and Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately). The Online icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment

music in every direction



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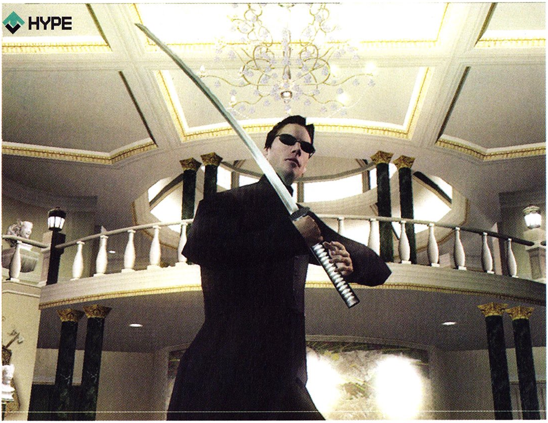
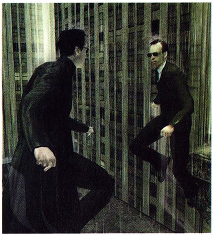
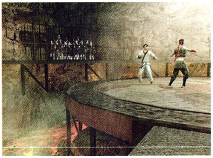






Pub. Atari **Dev.** Shiny Entertainment **Release** November

30 MINUTES WITH THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO

DONE IN 60 SECONDS—DAMN, WE'RE GOOD

00:01 Morpheus offers the choice of the red pill or the blue pill. We pick the blue one. The game is over. Does this mean we win?

00:02 Start again. For the sake of variety and gameplay, this time we choose the red pill. After taking it, we're shot through a mirror into a shadowy hallway. Neo's hair looks vaguely like it belongs in an impressionist painting, which is weirding us out a little bit. Then again, this *is* the Matrix, so weirding out is probably a normal state.

00:03 Uniformed men start coming out of a door into the hallway. Is it time to fight? After messing around with the controls for a bit, we get a basic idea of what we're supposed to be doing, although in our hands, Neo looks much less skilled than he did on the big screen. Nevertheless, dudes are starting to drop to the ground.

00:07 Dead. A screen pops up—apparently, this was just a test to determine the recommended skill level to play at. That's kind of cool! Not so cool: Apparently, we suck, as the recommended skill level is "Disciple (easy)." We're given the choice to accept the recommendation, reject it, or retake the test. We're comfortable with our inadequacies, so we accept the recommendation.

00:08 Obligatory movie clip, the part when Trinity is kicking butt and then Neo gets the phone call in his cubicle. Gameplay kicks in when Morpheus says to crawl to the facing cube. We make our way out of the office, following the instructions over the phone. It's pretty cool, although it seems a little pointless to have Neo peeking around cube walls when we have a clear line of sight ourselves.

00:11 Made it to the office at the end of the hall. Another movie clip. Now it's time to head to the roof. Neo crawls around on ledges and scaffolding to get there, but it's a bit boring because invisible walls block him from heading anywhere other than the direction he's supposed to go. We're wondering if choosing the easy level has anything to do with this.

00:15 On the roof. Cops are coming after Neo, but as he has yet to grab a weapon, the only option is to run. Occasionally, the cops will grab him; to get away, we have to mash the Triangle button. If you're not fast enough, the game gives you the option to retry the level or accept capture, which again ends the game. Do they not want us to play?

00:17 From the roof, Neo dodges into a stairwell and is now trying to reach the ground floor to get out of the building. Every few floors, there's a gate in place, so it's necessary to then navigate your way across the floor to a different stairwell to continue downward. On the sixth floor, the agents show up—it's impossible to escape from their grasp, so they have to be avoided completely.

00:21 We go out the exit to where Trinity is waiting on her bike. This sets off another movie clip, this time a montage of different pieces of the film to let Neo know that he's the one.

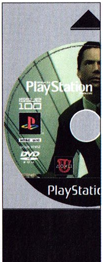
00:23 Training level in which Neo learns combat—the level looks kind of like an underground dungeon. Kung fu is the first item on the agenda, and silent takedowns are the first skill—just sneak up behind someone and press Circle. This is followed by hyperstrikes, lightning strikes, and three-hit combos. We don't always do as instructed, but the training doesn't make us go back until we've learned.

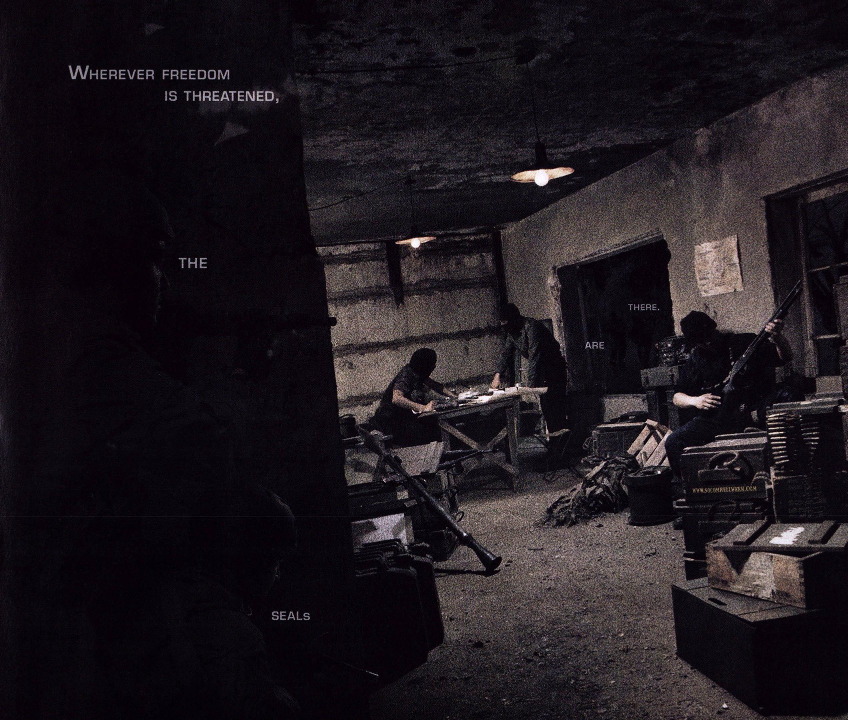
00:28 Neo is sent into a final battle at the end of the training level. The centerpiece of the room is a big metal battleground with a red scorpion emblazoned on it; this combined with Neo's ninja-esque outfit gives the whole thing a vaguely *Mortal Kombat* air.

00:30 After polishing off a few sets of opponents, the final opponent pops up: an old Asian guy wearing a shirt with flames on it and a pair of canary-yellow pants. He might look like a crazy dude wandering the streets, but he's substantially tougher than his predecessors. Nevertheless, Neo makes quick work of him, and the martial arts training comes to an end. «

PLAY IT

Next month, the disc features playable Neo—buy it and try it!





SOCOM 3
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MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB | Blood Violence

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WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR?

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
Fantasy Violence
Mild Language
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation 2

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

SONIC TEAM

SEGA

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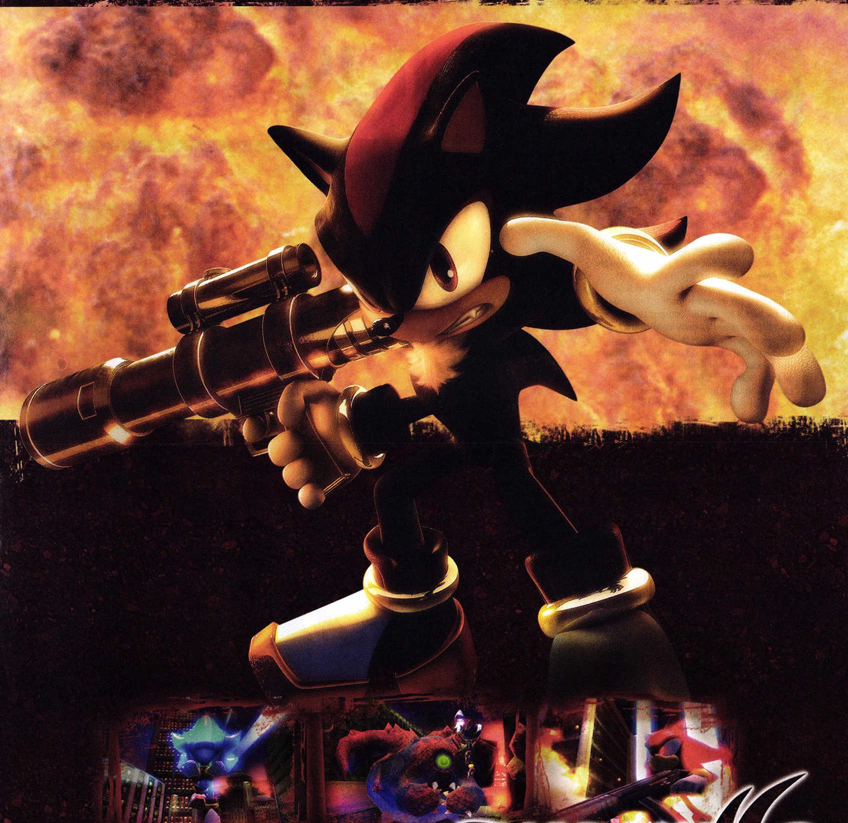
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PSP ENVY

PLAYERS IN THE EAST GET THE GAMING GOODS

Even with a killer app like *Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories* now available, the PSP is still in dire need of content (as outlined in Issue #96). One great title can sell the system, but that's still not enough to make the system last in the eyes of gamers. Fortunately, the situation isn't quite as grim in Japan, as the Tokyo Game Show had a lot of PSP content on display. Some games are already confirmed for American release, while others looked innovative and pushed the PSP in wacky directions but will likely not make it out of their homeland. So while you're stuck pondering whether to plunk down $40 for a copy of *Stealth* on UMD (!), Japanese gamers will be choosing from a variety of creatively charged games that, frankly, make us jealous.

METAL GEAR ACID 2

SNAKE EYES

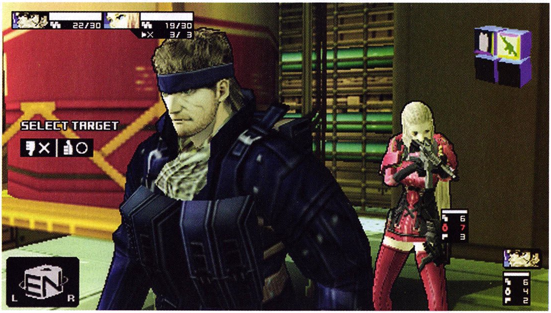
Leave it to Kojima and his team to find another way to put a wacky attachment onto a portable game. Kojima himself worked on *Boktai*, a GBA game that includes a solar sensor that gives in-game power based on actual sunlight. So it's not entirely unusual to see *Metal Gear Acid 2* come with a special pair of goggles, called "Tobidacid" in Japan and tentatively "Solid Eye" in the States.

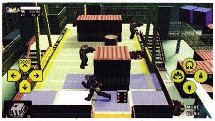
The "Solid Eye" is basically a set of 3D goggles that straps over the PSP screen. They're not your typical 3D goggles with one red lens and one blue, but rather a modern stereoscopic set like the ones used in Disneyland rides. One of the extras that will be in *MGA2* is a host of cut-scenes from *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* that have been optimized for the 3D effect, which actually does work. As a side effect, the goggles shield the screen from ambient light, making the screen glare free and easier to focus on.

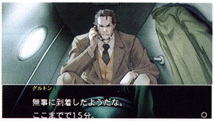
MGA2 director Shinta Nojiri adds that as a bonus, there will be "3D girls," cards with images of Japanese models scattered around the game as Easter eggs (then again, quite a few models appear in *Metal Gear Solid 3*, so maybe Kojima Productions just likes women). Finally, while the game will be bundled with the Solid Eye, that doesn't mean it's required for gameplay. You can play just fine without the Solid Eye; it simply enhances the experience by making the cut-scenes and overall game look 3D.

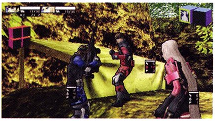
As for the rest of the game, Nojiri remains tight-lipped about details. When pressed about the story, he only reveals that it involves the FBI coercing Snake into investigating a defense contractor. Of course, since this is a sequel to one of the most bizarre stories to grace the *Metal Gear* universe, you can expect all sorts of weirdness to ensue. Nojiri also showed new characters, including Venus (a playable female agent who is quite similar to *MGA*'s Teliko), and bosses like Vince (a big dude who throws exploding barrels) and Chaigidiel (don't ask, that's how it looked like it was spelled in the trailer), who hangs from the ceiling. Finally, some tweaks—a better tutorial, more icons to indicate possible moves, and a streamlined method of moving Snake around the map—help make the game easier to manage.

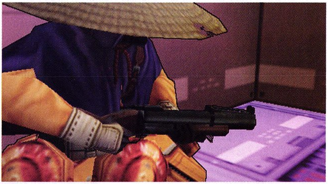
Pub. Konami **Dev.** Kojima Productions
Coming to America? Yep, but in early 2006

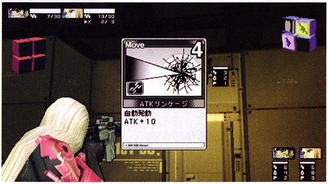




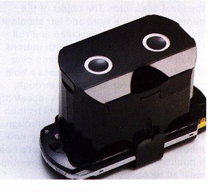

グルトン
無事に到着したようだな。
ここまでで15分。

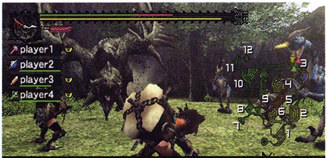






SOLID EYE
Think of what would happen if Kojima got a hold of a View-Master and re-engineered it for the PlayStation generation—it's kind of like that. It's bundled with *MGA2*, so everyone can see 3D.



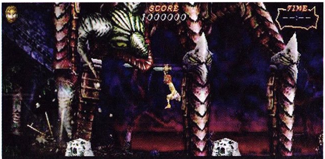


MONSTER HUNTER PORTABLE

BREAK OUT THE PORTABLE GRILL

Looks aren't everything, but in the case of *Monster Hunter Portable*, they're a nice big chunk of the overall package. One of the most graphically stunning PSP games shown at this year's Tokyo Game Show, *MHP* is the portable version of Capcom's action-RPG series in which you hunt down and either chop up (for food, weapons, and equipment) or capture (for *Pokémon*-style fighting—a new feature) a wide variety of dinosaurlike creatures, sized both great and small. Essentially, this is the handheld version of *Monster Hunter 2* on the PS2, and there isn't a big difference between the two in terms of graphics. Both sport an epic 3D look and feel, with wide vistas and faraway mountains and cliffs. The monsters are nicely detailed and as realistic-looking as they can be with little compromise in movement. A Laurel-and-Hardy handshake to the team—led by series director Kaname Fujioka and producer Tsuyoshi Tanaka (*Resident Evil Outbreak*)—for pulling off a game this good-looking on PSP.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom
Coming to America? Most likely

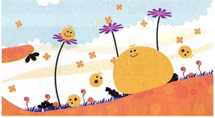


EXTREME GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

IS SIR ARTHUR GETTING WEAK?

Capcom's *Ghouls 'n Ghosts* series—also known as *Ghosts 'n Goblins, Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts 'n Hungry Hungry Hippos,* or whatever else you want to call it—has been a staple of the videogame world since the early arcade renaissance of the mid-'80s and the Nintendo Entertainment System's heyday, and now it's heading to the PSP. The problem with the series is that it's always been rather difficult, to say the least. Knowing this, Capcom seems to have made a few changes to make the PSP incarnation of the beloved series a little friendlier. That's right, friendlier, not easier. It should still offer the same challenge that the old games did, but Arthur (the knight in shining armor) will have a few ways of dealing with it all a little better. First and foremost, he can take more than one hit while wearing his armor. In previous games, one hit would strip Arthur down to his briefs, leaving him completely vulnerable to a one-hit kill—that's no longer the case. Also, when you die, you'll reappear where you were instead of starting off from a checkpoint.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom
Coming to America? Most likely

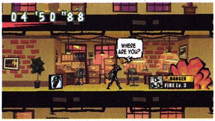


LOCO ROCO

THE HAPPIEST GAME ON EARTH

"Happy" isn't a word that's often used (try never) to describe a game, but for the cream-filled charm of *Loco Roco*, it's the ideal descriptor. The object of the game is to use the right and left shoulder buttons to tilt the game screen and roll the balloonish hero; hitting both buttons simultaneously lets our hero jump over obstacles. When he comes across a hole that's too small for him to get through, you can press the Circle button repeatedly to break him up into many small balloon guys, which funnel neatly down through the hole. *Loco Roco* is as endearing and innovative as *Katamari Damacy*. Let's hope a publisher picks it up for the States—then we'll all be happy.

Pub. Sony CEI **Dev.** Sony CEI
Coming to America? Probably not

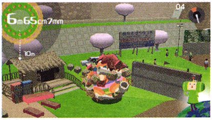


EXIT

STAGE PSP

We can see it now: The reviews for *Exit* will complain that there's too much pushing and pulling of boxes. Ah, but that's actually the point of Taito's stylish and colorful little side-scrolling puzzler, in which you guide a black-clad dude (he sort of looks like Zorro sans cape) through room after room on his missions to save accident survivors. The way you do this is what makes *Exit* so oddly intriguing: You have to move crates to reach your exit or entrance and then find switches to do things like open doors or put out fires (via a sprinkler system). While this is hardly a new concept—you old-old-schoolers should think of it a modern version of the classic game *Sokoban* (from aback in the 1980s)—it makes for a challenging PSP puzzle game.

Pub. Taito **Dev.** Taito
Coming to America? Maybe



MY, MY KATAMARI DAMACY

WILL THE KING LIKE BEING SMALL?

Look at the miniature katamari! Ohhh! How delightful! But what's this, there is only one analog stick? How will you ever make a suitable katamari with just one stick? Won't your katamari be composed with shame? Fret not, for the PSP version uses the D-pad and the face buttons to somewhat simulate the dual-analog control scheme! How wondrous you find this adaptation is entirely up to you, as everyone who's played it is divided into two camps: those who think the control scheme is an abomination to the galaxy, and those who think that while it is not ideal for katamari creation, it is a good compromise. Despite the controls, everyone still loves to roll marvelous katamari, now in a portable fashion.

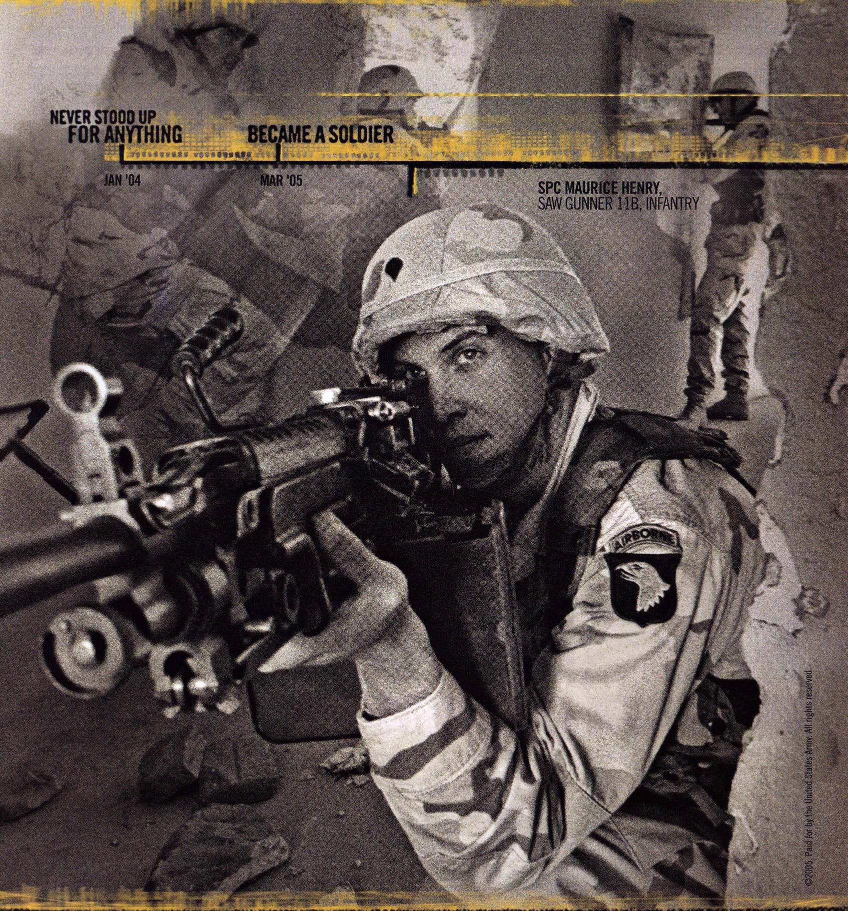
Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco
Coming to America? Most likely

EVERY EXTEND EXTRA

BLOWING UP THE PSP

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's *Lumines* was like digital crack for many *OPM* staffers, so it's welcome news that he has a new puzzle-action game in development for the PSP, *Every Extend Extra* (*E3* for short), which was on display at the Bandai booth at TGS. Before you go thinking, "That Mizuguchi comes up with the zaniest ideas!" know that E3 is actually based on the freeware game *Every Extend* by Omega (you can download it at www.the-underdogs.org/). Gameplay is simple: Move a bomb around the screen and set it off to create chain reactions. It's safe to assume that some of the game's "extra" will come in the form of improved graphics, more levels, and a hip soundtrack to make it some bizarre and glorious fusion of *Lumines* and *Rez*.

Pub. Bandai
Dev. Q Entertainment
Coming to America?
Most likely


NEVER STOOD UP FOR ANYTHING
JAN '04
BECAME A SOLDIER
MAR '05
SPC MAURICE HENRY,
SAW GUNNER 11B, INFANTRY
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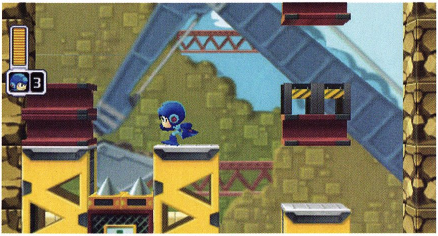
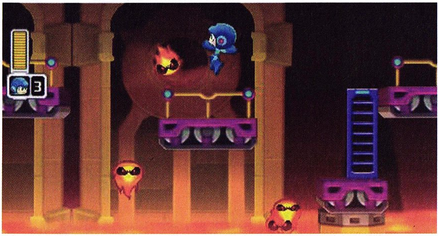


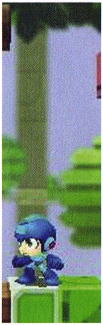


ROCKMAN ROCKMAN

MEGA ACTION ON THE PSP

There's a reason why *Mega Man* (*Rockman* to the Japanese) is older than the vast majority of people playing games today. We don't actually know what that reason is, but fans of the series have stuck with it, release after release, to aid Mega Man in his battles against either Dr. Wily or the forces of Sigma. But instead of creating yet another *Mega Man* game with a different set of bosses, Capcom is going back to its roots.

Rockman Rockman for the PSP is essentially an updated version of the original *Mega Man*, which many would argue is the most difficult game in the series. It will have some original content in the form of new enemies and bosses, but the best new feature of all is the level editor. Now you can create your own wacky environments and even decide what kinds of enemies to have and where to place them. The game also features a complete visual overhaul, with a slightly deformed Mega Man with a gigantic head running around. All we can say is, if you're going to do a remake these days, this is the way to do it.



Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **Coming to America?** Most likely

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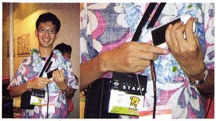
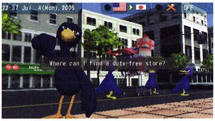


PORTABLE RESORT

GETTING AWAY ON THE GO

This is a "relaxation aid." It's supposed to make you feel like you're on vacation, with a good chunk of the UMD devoted to calming ocean noises and images of couples strolling down the beach. (Kind of like those Corona commercials.) That's not all, though: In addition to soothing you, this title turns your PSP into a ukulele! Here's a quick demonstration you PSP owners can perform: Flip your PSP upside down. Cup your left hand underneath the left side and let your fingers curl around and lie on top of the face buttons. Support the PSP with your right hand while resting your thumb on the analog nub. You hold down a face button to choose a chord while you strum the analog nub. Seriously. Look at how this guy does it.

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco
Coming to America? Probably not



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TALKMAN

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

This software turns your PSP into a translator. You plug in the USB microphone, select a "situation" (which gives the Talkman a context for your conversation) and a language set (you can translate to and from Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and English), and, well, talk to it. Talkman (a talking bird, don't ask) listens, asks you to choose from possible responses, and then responds out loud. The idea is that you say a phrase, pick what looks like the right translation, and hold the PSP up to your recipient; Talkman will then say your phrase in the target language. Talkman can even grade you on your pronunciation, in case you want to actually learn how to speak yourself. We sure could have used him in the restaurant that had no English menu.

Pub. Sony CEI **Dev.** Sony CEI
Coming to America? Probably not

TOKOBOT

SO MANY ROBOTS

On the surface, *Tokobot* resembles another typical third-person action-platformer for the PSP. Except you play as Bolt, a kid who, well, can't really do that much; all he really does is walk around and jump...oh, and command his squad of robots. First, you have the robots set up in a specific formation; at TGS we saw a circle-surrounding-you formation, a single-file-follow-you formation, and a hold-hands-side-by-side-with-you-in-the-middle formation. Depending on the formation, your robots can do things such as latch onto ledges, spin like a helicopter rotor, team up to move heavy objects, or even combine, Voltron-style, into a big robot. The idea is intriguing, and we hope there are enough robot formations and zany puzzles to give the game some robo-legs.

Pub. Tecmo **Dev.** Tecmo
Coming to America? Yes, in November

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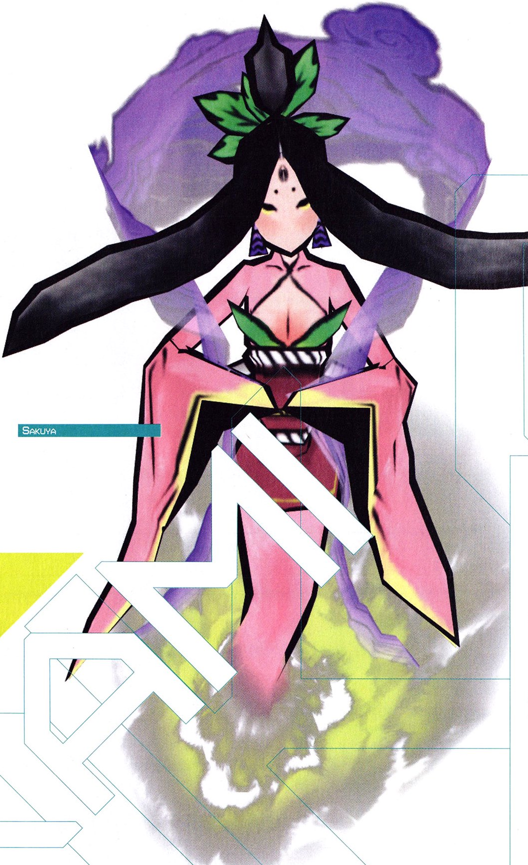

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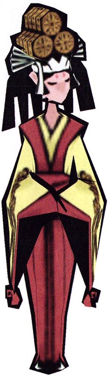
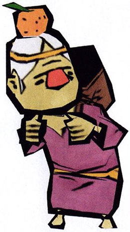
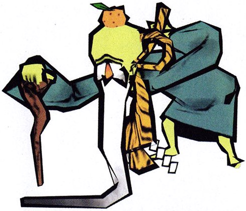


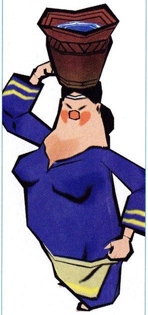
KUSHI



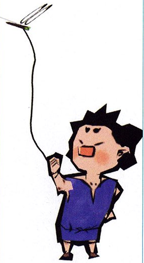
MRS. ORANGE



MR. ORANGE



MUSHI'S MAMA

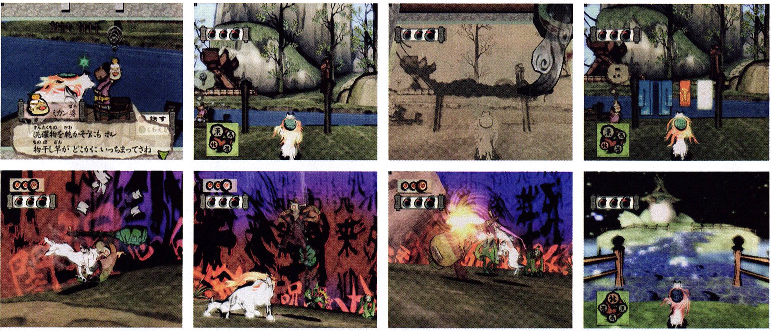


MUSHI

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **Release** Spring 2006

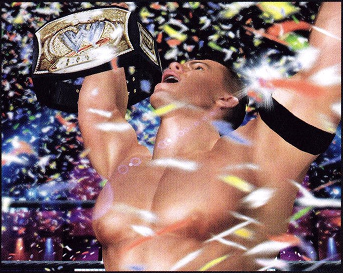
OKAMI

If you're like us, then you're probably rabid for more shots of Capcom's beautiful wolf-centered action-adventure game, *Okami*. Unfortunately, screenshots don't really do justice to the amazing hand-drawn look (we particularly like the characters), but they'll have to do until next year's release.



ミカン婆

洗濯物を乾かそうにも オレ
物干し竿が どこかに いっちまってさね



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Blood
Language
Sexual Themes
Violence

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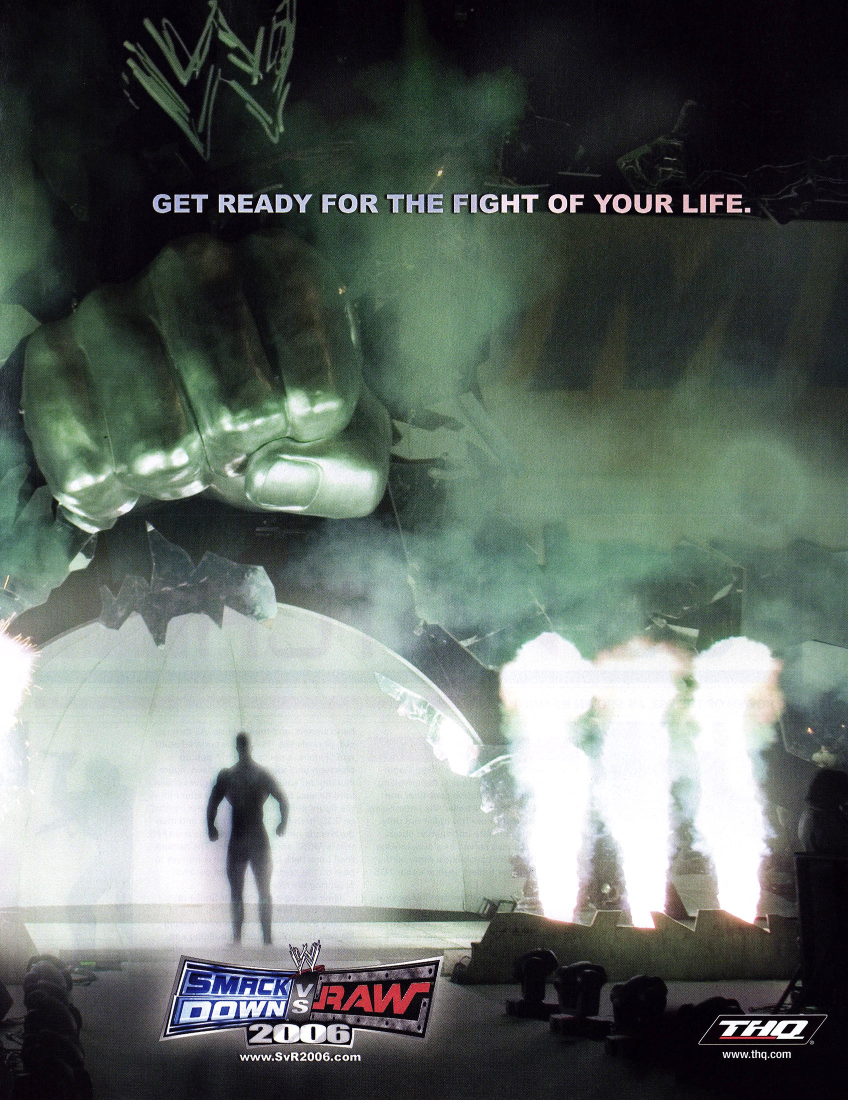
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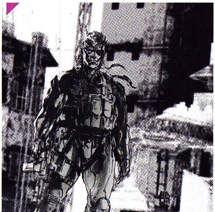
PS3 WATCH

THE POWER OF THE PS3, AS SHOWN BY MGS4



METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

Undoubtedly, the buzz at the Tokyo Game Show surrounded two topics: the unveiling of the Nintendo Revolution controller and the *Metal Gear Solid 4* trailer, the latter being of much interest to us. The trailer not only offered some concrete information about the game, but also served as a slick-looking demo of the PS3's capabilities, more so than most of the other trailers seen at either TGS or E3.

The trailer opens with unfamiliar-looking jets flying past a grim, brownish sky, and the camera then pans down to a wrecked city street (reminiscent of Mogadishu in *Black Hawk Down*—it's also worth noting the fact that this is a city street and not an isolated base, which has been the standard setting in previous *MGS* titles). For several minutes, a group of soldiers (whom we watch through the eyes of one of them, first-person shooter style) advance down the street, duck for cover from incoming fire, communicate via hand signals, and then split up. All throughout, phrases like "Forget prerendered stuff!" and "Finally, a policy switch?" pop up onscreen until we notice a shadowy figure eluding our soldier. The soldier gives chase until he sees the elusive man go after him—the figure performs a close-quarters combat, or CQC, grab for the soldier's rifle and then backhands him as the words "This is no FPS, this is *MGS*" appear onscreen. The camera then pans back to Snake as he continues to beat on the soldier, taking him out and procuring his rifle.

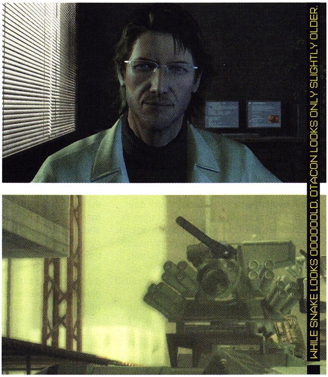
Next we see a much older Snake (it almost looks like Kojima was thinking of casting Burt Reynolds in the role) making his way through a wrecked building and then attempting to contact someone after securing his location. (The chronology is established at this point by the phrase "X years after Big Shell," confirming that *MGS4* does indeed take place after *MGS2*.) The words "An old man exhausted of battle" soon appear, followed by Snake suffering a coughing spasm that can only be cured

IF METAL GEARS HAVE ORGANIC LEGS, WHAT KIND OF CREATURE DO THEY COME FROM?

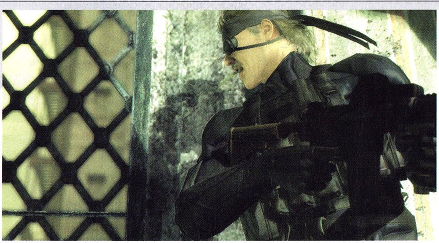
by some sort of special injection into his neck, which hints at a further extension of *MGS3*'s healing system. Also, the fact that Snake has only one eye (both Solidus Snake from *MGS2* and Big Boss/Naked Snake from *MGS3* lose an eye in their respective games) invites speculation as to how he loses his eye between *MGS2* and *MGS4*; heck, he might have replaced his eye by choice.

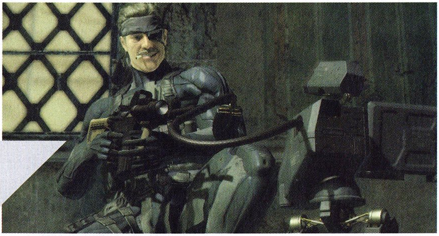
Additionally, the words "A new enemy created in battle" appear, and Snake stealthily spots a convoy full of soldiers, tanks, APCs…and Metal Gears (which used to be rare but are now apparently common enough to be part of a regular military patrol). These aren't your "normal" Metal Gears—like Metal Gear Rex or Metal Gear Ray from previous games—either. They are smaller, with organic-looking legs fused to a Metal Gear chassis, which sports a dome that suspiciously resembles R2-D2's. We are then shown the Metal Gear's point of view as the dome's "eye" quickly scans the area. As mentioned before, Snake himself has one good eye; the patch in place of his left eye looks like a cybernetic module and has the words "Solid Eye System" on it. Snake activates the patch, and the camera shows Snake's POV through the patch as he scans the soldiers, tanks, and Metal Gears for information on their weapons and numbers—it also displays a map in the upper-right corner. While Snake is trying to avoid detection by the soldiers and Metal Gears, he is spotted by a smaller robot that has been tracking him; when the camera shifts to the robot's point of view, we see the phrase "Made by Hal Emmerich" typed in the corner. Otacon's face then appears on the little robot's screen, and he and the robot exchange some pleasantries about the current situation.

Oddly enough, while Snake looks quite aged, Otacon doesn't look much older. Then again, Solidus Snake (another genetic clone of Big Boss, just like Solid Snake) experienced rapid aging due to the cloning process, so it looks like that same effect is hitting our Snake. At one point, Snake pulls out a cigarette, and Otacon remarks, "I thought you quit," to which Snake replies, "No, just



WHILE SNAKE LOOKS OOOOOOLD, OTACON LOOKS ONLY SLIGHTLY OLDER.





DOES THIS LITTLE ROBOT REPLACE THE CODEC?

found a new light," which is just another one of those crazy metaphoric conversations that Kojima puts into his games. Snake then decides to rush into battle, with Otacon's tiny robot following. After this dramatic end, Kojima decides to throw in some humorous meta-commentary by having Snake and Otacon talk about the PS3's Cell processor (accompanied by footage of the ducks-in-the-sink demo and the *Killzone* PS3 trailer) and how it is the key to winning the console war.

KOJIMA GOES REAL TIME

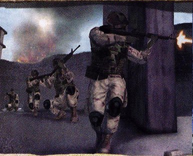
Hideo Kojima didn't have much time for press appointments, as he was busy making himself available to showgoers. Every day at TGS, Kojima spent a big chunk of time at the center stage of the Konami booth doling out information about the *MGS* franchise to TGS attendees. At 3 p.m. each day, he carried out a presentation entitled "*MGS4* on PS3." After playing a humorous movie called "MGS3: Snake Eraser"—which showed Raiden being sent through time to various moments in *MGS3*, only to get completely smacked by everyone in the game—and saying that maybe Raiden will find a place in *MGS5*, not *MGS4*, Kojima got into the heart of his presentation.

While the trailer already poked a few jokes at the PS3 *Killzone*'s expense, Kojima added a few more comments, saying, "This trailer isn't a CG or something that we've rendered on a high-spec PC. This is the real thing on a PlayStation 3 development kit." Kojima then aired the trailer again, but this time he actually pulled out a controller (we weren't close enough to see, but the dev-kit controller resembled a regular PS2 DualShock 2 controller) to show that the trailer wasn't just a prerendered movie, but something that could be manipulated.

Making little side comments here and there ("[Snake is] a bit pigeon-toed," "All the equipment made by Otacon carries this mark..."), Kojima would pause the trailer and manipulate the camera, showing that everything was being generated in real time. Details not seen in the trailer, such as Snake's feet, were revealed during this demo. Kojima then showed off just how detailed the trailer was by zooming onto a part of Snake's costume to reveal a hidden logo. So after teasing us with a PS2-generated trailer at E3, Kojima gave us a real-time demonstration of the PS3's power at TGS, and for PS2 gamers, it was the highlight of the show.

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Kojima Productions **Release** TBD

OUR GAME DEVELOPERS DON'T RELY ON IMAGINATION.



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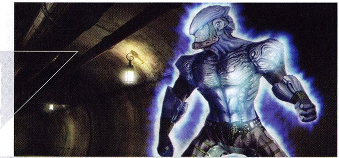
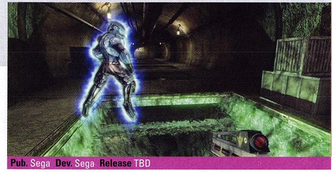
The industry was hoping to get its grubby hands on the shiny PS3 at TGS, but no dice. In fact, with the exception of Kojima demonstrating the MGS4 trailer on his dev kit, PS3 content at the show consisted of numerous announcements and a demo reel of game trailers (some updated, some new). Then again, TGS is meant for the public; while industry insiders got a peek at the PS3, TGS was mostly meant to show everyone else just how cool it can be. Here's the rundown of the other games that Sony had on display.

FIFTH PHANTOM SAGA

WHERE ARE THE OTHER FOUR PHANTOMS?

One of Sega's offerings at both E3 and TGS, this game is one of the harder ones to understand. Based on our limited trailer viewings, it seems to be a combination of FPS and ghost commander, as you shoot stuff while ordering your phantom to do stuff for you.



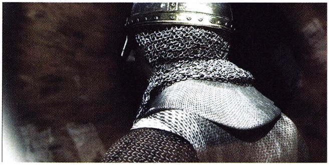


Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega **Release** TBD

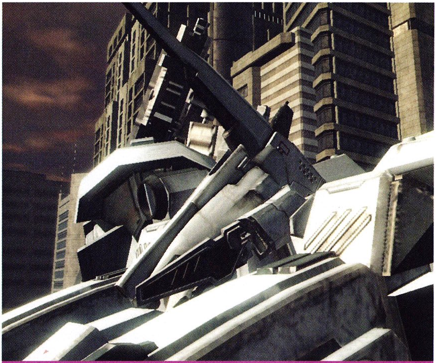
PROJECT ASSASSIN

PRINCE KILLER?

This is one of the few new games announced at TGS. All the teaser showed was that the game is being developed by the *Prince of Persia* team and features an assassin stabbing some armored dude.



Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Ubisoft Montreal **Release** TBD

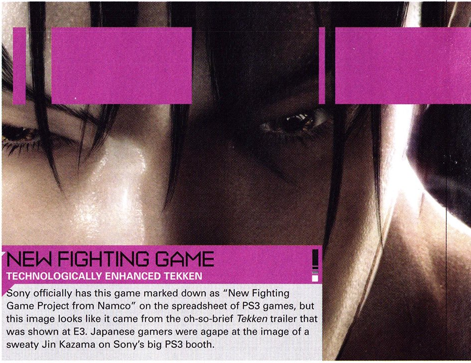


ARMORED CORE 4

DEMONSTRATING THE CELL CORE

Next to racing games, games involving giant robots always make good tech demos for new hardware. The developer's interviews with various Japanese media revealed that the PS3 allows for more accurate calculations of collision and damage (meaning area-specific damage is crazy accurate now) and a bigger focus on personalizing your armored core.

Pub. TBD **Dev.** From Software **Release** TBD

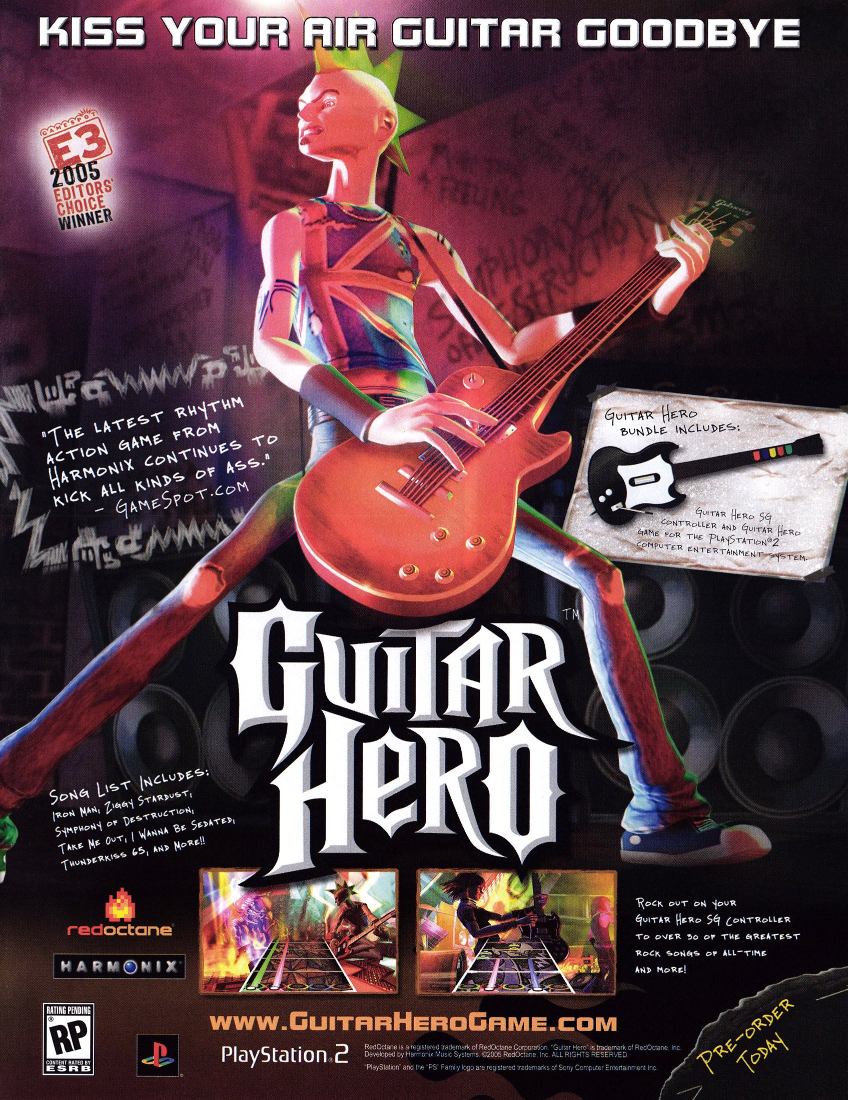


NEW FIGHTING GAME

TECHNOLOGICALLY ENHANCED TEKKEN

Sony officially has this game marked down as "New Fighting Game Project from Namco" on the spreadsheet of PS3 games, but this image looks like it came from the oh-so-brief *Tekken* trailer that was shown at E3. Japanese gamers were agape at the image of a sweaty Jin Kazama on Sony's big PS3 booth.

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **Release** TBD



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FORMULA ONE

BRITS GO ZOOM-ZOOM!

While everyone expects Polyphony Digital to go crazy with its next title, Sony CEE's Liverpool studio is quietly making a pretty slick-looking racing game to tide us over. We hope the game will incorporate real-time bottle opening followed by the pouring of champagne all over the winning vehicle.

Pub. Sony CEE **Dev.** Sony CEE Liverpool **Release** TBD

GENJI 2

FIVE HOURS OF PS3 BLISS?

Even before the first game came out, Sony confirmed that *Genji 2* is leaving the PS2 and jumping right over to the PS3. Let's hope that the looks and the length are both enhanced for the PS3.

Pub. Sony CEI **Dev.** Sony CEI **Release** TBD

VISION GT

GT5(?) PROBABLY COMING OUT IN 2015

We didn't learn much more about the game, but Sony showed a trailer that features a sweet RX-7 racing against a Lancer Evolution. We're still not sure whether this is a true *GT5* or a slicker *GT4* for PS3.

Pub. Sony CEI **Dev.** Polyphony Digital **Release** TBD

KILLZONE

FLYING THROUGH THE DANGER ZONE

While this trailer completely and utterly wowed everyone at E3, it didn't have quite the same effect at TGS. Sure, it still looks cool, but the *MGS4* trailer playing on a continual loop in the Konami booth pretty much completely stole whatever thunder *Killzone* for PS3 had bottled. Let's hope we see more in-game stuff next time.

Pub. Sony CEE **Dev.** Guerrilla Games **Release** TBD

UNTITLED CG CONCEPT WORK

ROMANCE OF THE PS3 KINGDOMS?

While announcing a few new PS3 titles (see *Fatal Inertia*, pg. 99), Koei also showed this piece of footage for something that can only be described as "related to the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* franchise." Instead of a strategy game trailer, we got a pretty cool real-time demo of a medieval Chinese dude twirling a ball.

Pub. Koei **Dev.** Koei **Release** TBD

SAMSUNG
Budweiser

THE GETAWAY

DOWNTOWN LONDON TRAPPED IN A CELL

Not to be deterred by the likes of similar games that revolve around criminals who drive cars in open-ended city environments, Sony is still making another *Getaway* title, but for the PS3. Since it's the first PS3 title featuring a massive environment, Japanese gamers looked impressed by the detail shown in this trailer.

Pub. Sony CEE **Dev.** Sony CEE Soho **Release** TBD

BIOHAZARD 5

STARRING KEANU REEVES?

Gamers at TGS got to see the *RE5* (*Biohazard* in Japan) trailer that premiered at Sony's PlayStation meeting, and that's about it. No new details confirmed, but rumors still say that the game features Chris Redfield, that it takes place in either South Africa or South America, and that it will feature a tons of smart zombies to kill.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **Release** TBD

FATAL INERTIA

PHYSICS CAN KILL!

Of the games Koei announced, *Fatal Inertia* looked like the furthest along, as it was shown on a dev kit rather than as a trailer. It kind of resembles pod racing in *Star Wars*, except with a physics engine that allows for destructible terrain. Also, this is the only PS3 game that has a date attached to it—Koei is hinting at a 2006 release.

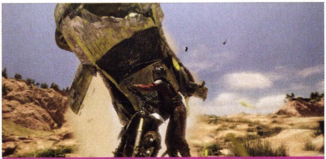
Pub. Koei **Dev.** Koei **Release** 2006

LAIR

ENTER THE DRAGON'S LAIR

All we knew before TGS was that Factor 5 is making a non–*Star Wars* game for once. We don't know much more than that even after watching the trailer, as all it shows is two awesome-looking dragons fighting each other. Factor 5 claims that the trailer is in real time, so we can take solace in knowing it looks cool.

Pub. TBD **Dev.** Factor 5 **Release** TBD

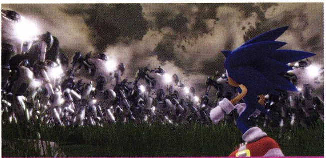


MOTOR STORM

A STORM OF MOTORS!

Sony showed the same trailer for *Motor Storm* that we saw at E3, and the crazy trailer featuring rally cars and bikes getting into a vicious accident still looked cool. We heard some pretty audible gasps in the TGS audience as a rally car flipped over and started falling onto a biker dude before the trailer ended.

Pub. TBD **Dev.** Evolution Studios **Release** TBD

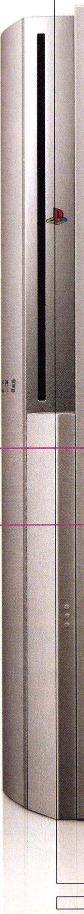


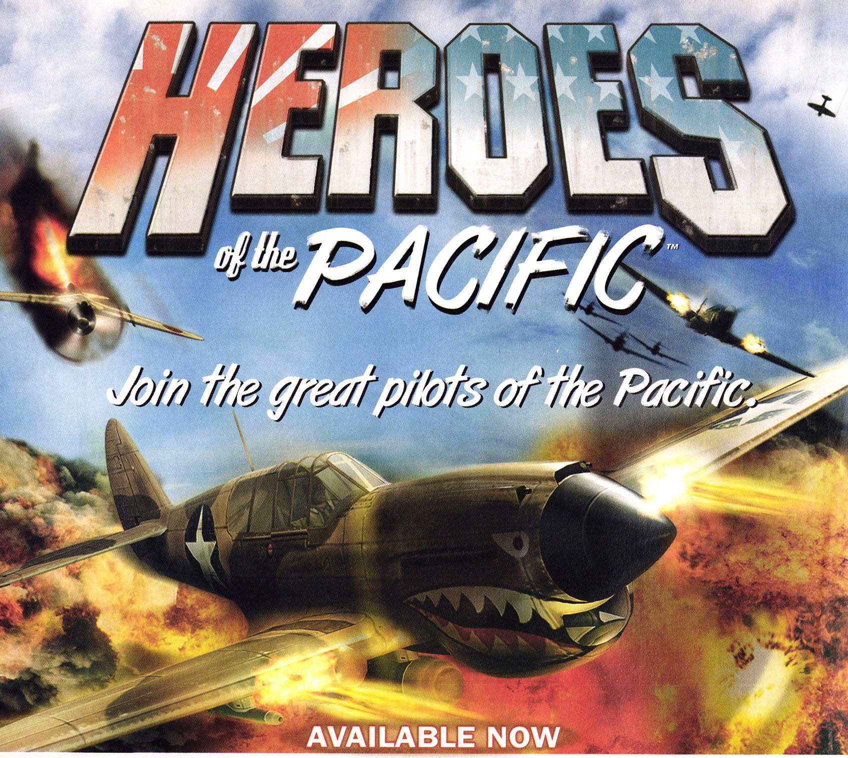
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

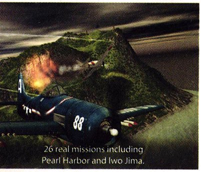
NEXT-GENERATION BLAST PROCESSING

Sonic turned 15 this year, and as a tribute to the original game, creator Yuji Naka decided to title Sonic's next-gen debut *Sonic the Hedgehog*. Not much else was shown in this trailer besides Sonic running around really fast, his cartoony appearance contrasting against the realistic-looking robots.

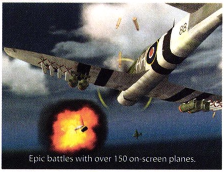
Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega **Release** TBD

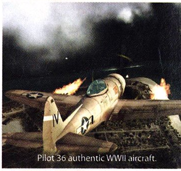





26 real missions including Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima.

Fierce online multiplayer battles for up to 8 players.


Epic battles with over 150 on-screen planes.


Pilot 36 authentic WWII aircraft.

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence
Strong Language

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OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
GAME OF THE MONTH

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RATING KEY

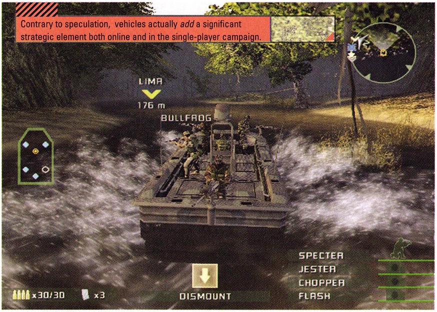
Octagons. Stomps. Ocs. Blargs. Call our rating symbols what you will—just know that any game that receives five of 'em is something truly special that deserves a spot in your collection. On the other hand, a 2.5 is merely mediocre. And a 0.5? Well…at least they're fun to rip apart.

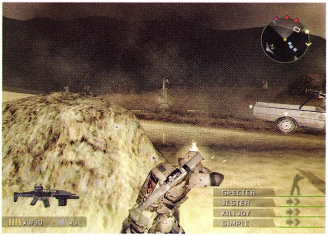
[●●●●●]

SOCOM 3: U.S. NAVY SEALS

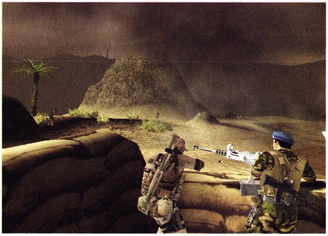
RAISING THE BAR, BOTH ONLINE AND OFF

The look of the game continues to improve, with more detail, better animation, and a longer view distance than before.


Contrary to speculation, vehicles actually *add* a significant strategic element both online and in the single-player campaign.



SPECTER
JESTER
CHOPPER
FLASH
x7/30
x3



I've made no secret of the fact that the *SOCOM* series is one of my favorite franchises around. In fact, if you're also a fan, chances are we've played together online. (If not, you should keep an eye on the *OPM* message boards; you can expect to see regular games announced there all the time once the game's released.) After spending some quality time with *SOCOM 3*'s online play, I have this to say: I cannot *wait* for this game to come out so I can find full matches at all hours of the day. The game sports so many improvements that it's hard to know where to begin.

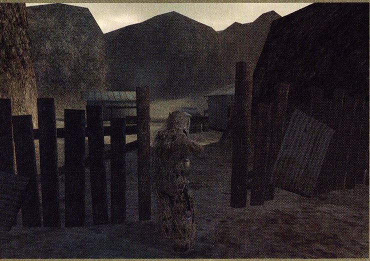
How about this: 32 players. You may think, "Sure, that's twice as many players as in previous games—big deal." But the difference in feel is just spectacular. Consider the fact that with 32 players running around on a map, you're now likely to run into enemy players twice as often. You're twice as likely to have those legendary encounters that make the series great. You can probably expect twice as many kills. But more significant is the way it impacts teamwork. With 16 players on a team, you have so many more options for real strategy.

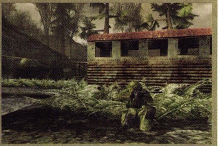
Perhaps an example is in order. One of the two new game modes is called convoy, and it works like this: The terrorists start off with two empty cargo trucks, two machine-gun-equipped pickups, and a tank. The SEALs start off with two jeeps, also equipped with machine guns. The terrorists try to move the cargo trucks to two separate loading zones, load them up, and then move them to an extraction point. The SEALs try to prevent this from happening.

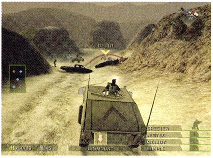
So I start the game on the SEAL team. As soon as the round starts, half the team loads into jeeps, four players each. The other half splits themselves between the two loading zones, setting down mines for the terrorists' vehicles and taking up snipe points around the areas. The jeep crew (of which I am a part) races off across the desert, keeping to the gullies as much as possible to avoid drawing notice from the tank. We know that if the terrorists are playing it smart, they're trying to keep the trucks close to the tank, so we're not expecting to be able to take the trucks out right there. But that's OK; that's not really our goal: We roar out of the gullies *behind* the trucks and drive them toward the loading zones so quickly that they don't have time to notice our other teams staking out positions. We quickly leave the (significantly slower) tank behind and are able to continue to harry the trucks all the way to the loading zones, where they encounter mines, HE grenades, snipers taking out the drivers through the windshields, and all other sorts of mayhem reserved for this very personal terrorist hell. The trucks go boom right on cue.

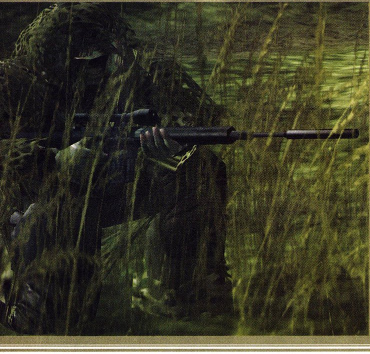
It was beautiful.

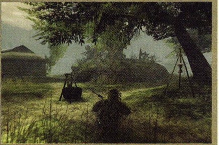
So, yes, if you were wondering, the vehicles work wonderfully. There was some concern that they'd diminish some of the game's strategy, but they actually enhance it—especially in the vehicle-specific convoy mode. But you know what? If you insist that vehicles don't belong in "real" *SOCOM*, you can turn them off. That's the beauty of the vastly expanded option set for creating online games. You get to choose the map, game type, time of day, weapon set, vehicles, and respawn options (in all gameplay modes save one) in



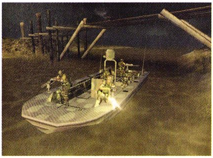








SPECTER
JESTER
DEADPAN
COLDKILL
x0/10
x3
BUG COMPUTER



HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS

Last month, we told you about the majesty of the ghillie suit. Now we can show you. Completing one of the game's three areas of operation at Commander level (the highest difficulty available at the start of the game) earns you the use of the ghillie suit online in maps set in the completed area. What's the big deal, you ask? Take a look at the screens above and at left and ask yourself if you'd notice these guys lying right in front of you in the heat of battle.

addition to the standard round count and time. I will be very, very surprised if you can't find a game type that works for you.

Now, here's the kicker. Ready? You are actually going to *want* to play the single-player campaign, too! I know that may be hard to believe for longtime *SOCOM* fans, but it's absolutely true. Part of this is a result of the developers' decision to sacrifice just the slightest bit of realism for the sake of entertainment. This makes the missions a lot more action-packed, a hell of a lot more exciting, and a great deal more accessible to the average gamer. (This is enhanced by the much-needed addition of checkpoints, which now allow you to get even more obsessive about earning the highest rating!) One memorable moment featured the SEAL team racing down the canals of a Polish city in a speedboat, outrunning pursuing boats packed with terrorists. Need I say it? This is not your older brother's *SOCOM*.

But far more influential than the action or the accessibility is this simple fact: Playing through the single-player campaign unlocks some very significant swag online. It's not just the spectacularly effective ghillie suit we told you about last month, either (see the sidebar for details). I'm talking about new weapons and weapon mods that can make a real difference online. If you want real online cred, you're going to have to *complete* the single-player game…possibly multiple times. Don't panic—it's actually fun.

I do have some complaints, of course. For one thing, if you get all 32 players online in a small space, the framerate can stutter a bit—though it's *significantly* better than what you may be familiar with in *SOCOM II* (it remains to be seen, of course, what impact a full server might have). But really, how often will this happen?

More significant is the question of how the weapon customizations will affect play balance over the long term. The array of weapon options introduces so many variables that I can't help but expect some balancing issues to arise as the public at large gets to spend serious time with the game.

My only other major complaint is the fact that the very final moments of the single-player campaign are just excruciatingly difficult. I had absolutely no trouble with the game at all until that last checkpoint; it struck me as an odd balancing issue that there wasn't enough time to fix, and the difficulty may drive you to swearing.

But considering all the bold changes made to what has become a very successful formula, a few complaints like these don't seem like such a big deal. The series has maintained—or improved—its gritty realism, its immersive, nail-biting single-player campaign, and its extraordinarily engrossing online play in spite of some substantial alterations. I don't know about you, but that seems like a pretty impressive feat to me. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT In spite of a few persistent flaws, the *SOCOM* experience—both online and off—has been notably improved.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Zipper **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●●]

An Epic Tale of War, Romance and Betrayal...

"...an RPG, with the kind of innovative systems and gameplay, story and characters that can incite a movement."
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I'll never forget the first time I saw the Yason on the battlefield. Their ears are a little different from ours. But everything else looks the same.

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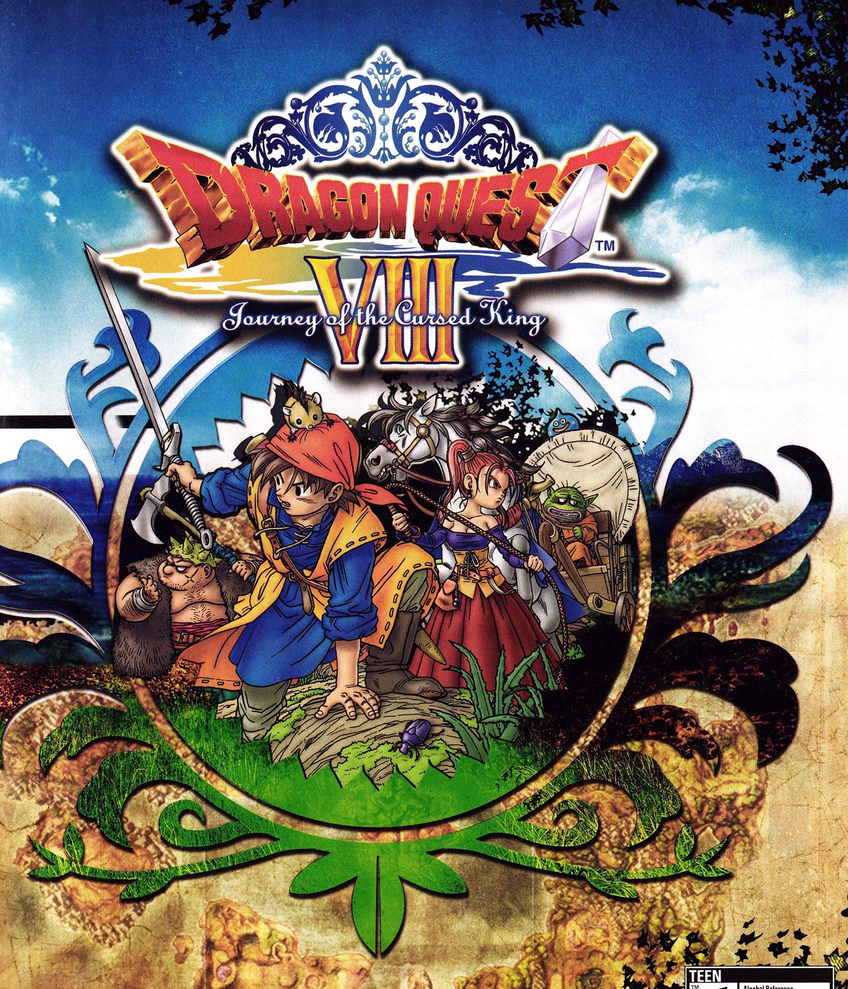
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Suggestive Themes
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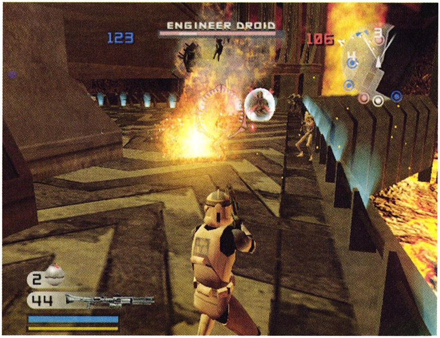
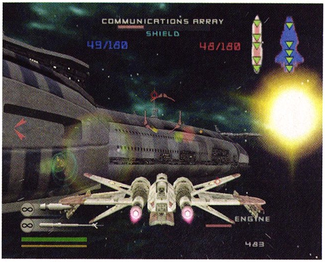
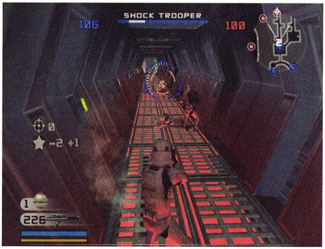
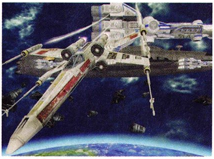








STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

MORE OF THE SAME, ONLY BETTER

Writing about games, believe it or not, has its challenges. For example: How does one creatively write about the newest *Star Wars* game, when *so many* others have been written about in the last 20 years? And on top of that, how does one write about the new *Star Wars* game that's essentially the same as the *Star Wars* game that came out only one year earlier? Well, for starters, one writes a long-winded opening paragraph.

Following a recent and somewhat unsettling trend of releasing a game, and then one year later releasing a sequel that the original game really should have been (see also: *Burnout Revenge*, *X-Men Legends II*, et al.), *Battlefront II* builds upon what worked in the first *Battlefront* with some necessary improvements and refinements. And now that all six of the movies are cinematic history, everything from the entire *Star Wars* saga is fair game. The problem with last year's franchise premiere was that the nostalgia for the characters and settings of the original trilogy overpowered the unfamiliar (and in some cases, unlovable) assets of the first two prequels. But now that *Episodes I*, *II*, and *III* are finished, there's enough new content to keep things fresh. Which is good, because honestly...Endor and Hoth are getting pretty stale.

The Battle of Hoth is actually a good place to start the comparison: It's essentially the same map as in the first game, with the same objectives and weapon and vehicle placements. So it's not surprising that it plays essentially the same way. Troops occupying the area capture control points, and when your team controls the entire map (or when the enemy runs out of reinforcements), victory is declared. It's the *Battlefield* system, and it's a pretty damn good one. The vehicles are balanced better—AT-STs and CIS tanks are still as powerful as ever with a proper driver, but all it takes is a quick-witted vanguard with a rocket launcher to make it a fair fight.

But in the single-player game, that responsibility often falls on your shoulders. Just like in the first *Battlefront*, you can't count on your team AI to do anything beyond basic combat. If a control point absolutely must be captured, or a turbo laser turret needs to be destroyed, you have to do it yourself. Which is manageable, but it makes online multiplayer (and even splitscreen co-op) that much more refreshing, because playing with other humans online is—surprisingly—much more reliable.

The signature piece of *Battlefront II* is the ship-to-ship combat. Two enormous capital ships and their fighter squadrons square off in interstellar war, but there's a seamless transition between on-foot action and starfighting, so the only way to take down the enemy's ship is to board it on foot and then sabotage it from the inside. Once the shields are down, the fighters can commence with the blowing-uppery. This element makes *Battlefront II* feel much more like the complete *Star Wars* experience; it's just unfortunate that the game had to render everyone's copies of the first *Battlefront* useless in the process. « *Andrew Pfister*

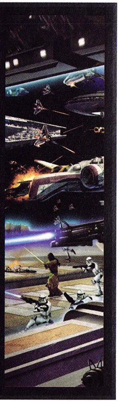
JEDI Uncomplicated combat and vehicles make it fun for all skill levels

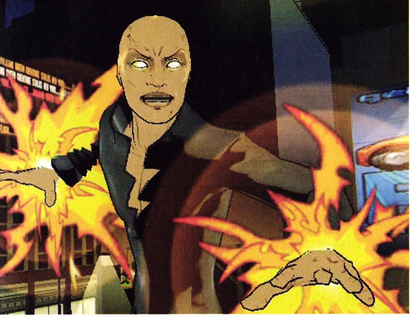
SITH You just know there's going to be a *Battlefront III* and we're all going to buy it again

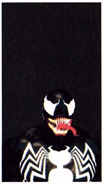
JAR JAR Enough with the Hoth, already

Pub. LucasArts **Dev.** Pandemic **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

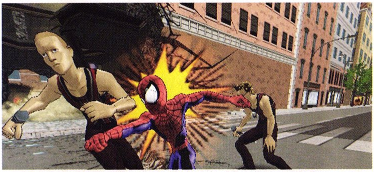


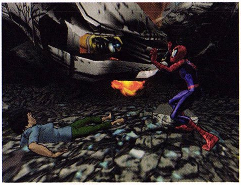


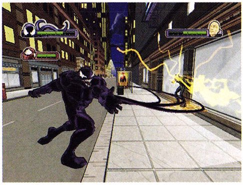


ULTIMATE ORIGINS

So what's the difference between Ultimate superheroes and regular ones? The Ultimate Marvel series takes classic comic characters and modernizes their look, story, and origin. The intent of the series is to attract new readers who may not want to catch up on all of the years of back story. Think of it as comics for the MTV generation.







ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

SAME + GOOD + BAD = SAME

Treyarch's *Spider-Man* games have a good reputation. *Ultimate Spider-Man* doesn't really do anything to diminish that rep, or improve it—the game is basically like its predecessor, *Spider-Man 2*, except with a shiny, cel-shaded skin. Big, free-form NYC to roam? Check. Numerous side missions? Check. Appearances by other superheroes and supervillains? Check. Lots of collectibles to hunt down? Check.

This is all well and good, but unfortunately, some of the not-good things about *Spider-Man 2* are back as well, most notably a short story campaign, the repetitive nature of side missions, and too-basic fighting mechanics. One of the few changes you'll notice is that webslinging mechanics have been simplified, which takes a bit of the exhilaration out of it. However, this negative is counterbalanced by the positive of getting to play as the incredibly strong Venom, who is a nice juxtaposition to the dexterous, but not powerful, Spidey.

The graphics are improved, and the cut-scenes in particular stand out; a technique involving comic-book frames really invokes the material of origin. The story is good, but it's unlike the first two *Spider-Man* games' stories, which were tied to the plots of mainstream movies and were therefore more accessible to the general public. Here, it helps if you're somewhat of a comic fan since otherwise you may not understand (or care about) what's happening.

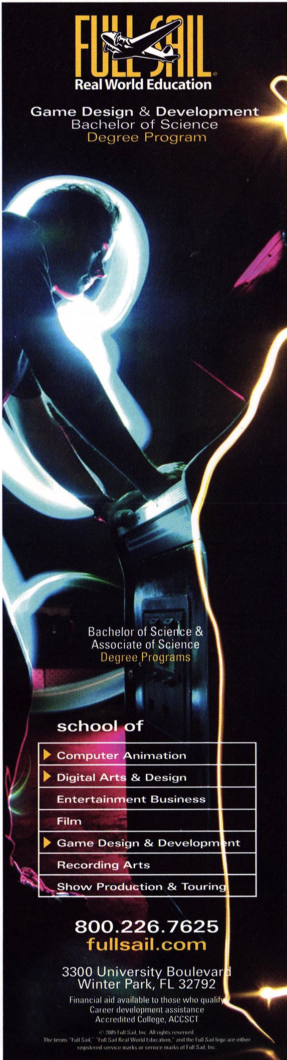
If you love *Spider-Man* games and shoot for 100 percent completion, then buy it; if you're just looking for light diversion, go the way of the rental. « *Dana Jongewaard*

PROS New features are great additions to *Blitz* gameplay. Just plain fun

CONS The campaign mode could be just a little more robust. AI is weak in spots

Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]



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RATCHET: DEADLOCKED

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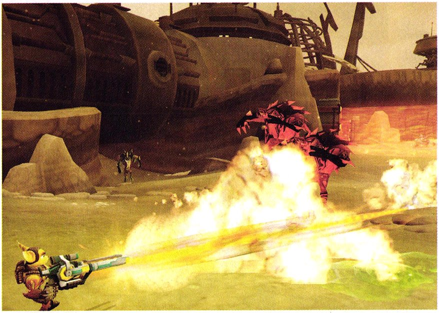
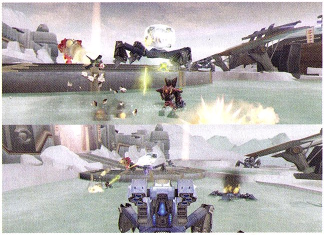
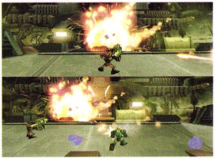
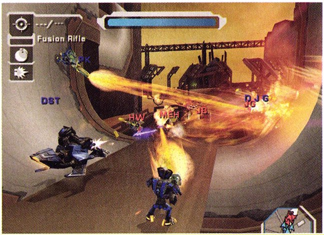








I have good news, and I have bad news. The good news is, those of us dreading this new, dark, edgy *Ratchet*—fearing the lighthearted franchise was heading in a *Jak* direction—were making much ado about nothing. *Deadlocked*, while certainly slightly edgier than previous *Ratchet* games, is a far cry from even the modestly brooding tone of *Jak II*. The game still boasts the tongue-in-cheek, satirical humor that made previous *Ratchet*s great.

The bad news is, this ain't no *Up Your Arsenal*. The game has been scaled way, way back: The platforming elements have been all but completely excised, resulting in a game that's almost entirely about firepower. If you griped about the franchise's gradual shift to more shooting and less jumping, this one is going to bug the hell out of you.

But that's not to say the game's without merit. Eliminating the platforming elements makes for a more focused game; no longer do you have to choose between maxing out your weapons and working through the story. Now it's all about the weapons, baby, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, as *Ratchet*'s combat engine has always been deliciously user-friendly.

Even so, this makes *Deadlocked* a much shallower experience. Of course, I'm not saying the previous three games have been *War and Peace*, but they certainly had a little more meat to them than this snack-sized morsel. That goes for the story, too: Forsaking even the moderate story elements of the previous games, *Deadlocked* trots out a *Running Man* cliché to string its battles together—Ratchet and Clank have been kidnapped by underground media mogul Gleeman Vox, fitted with explosive collars, and forced to compete in a live reality TV show based around arena combat. Now, I'm a fan of the hysterical, satirical riffs on "The Vox Network," "Vox News," and "Vox Sports," and of the often amusing play-by-play commentary... but otherwise—yawn.

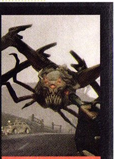
And another yawn for the only moderately revamped online mode. I was hoping, with the main game scaled back so much, that the online mode would prove more robust this time around. But aside from two additional players (making 10 in all) and a handful of new game modes, this is pretty much the same arcadey experience as in the previous game, complete with the awkward interface, instant-death pacing, and virtually strategy-free gameplay. It's a hoot at first, sure, but after playing a single game in each of the modes, I found myself more interested in getting back to the single-player experience.

In the end, *Deadlocked* feels like a fun, funny, frivolous arcade shooter. It's certainly put together well enough to earn a high spot on your rental list, but unless you're the obsessive type who yearns to max out every weapon, you probably won't need more than a day or two with it. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT It's cotton candy: full of fluffy, sugary goodness but utterly devoid of nutritional value.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Insomniac **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

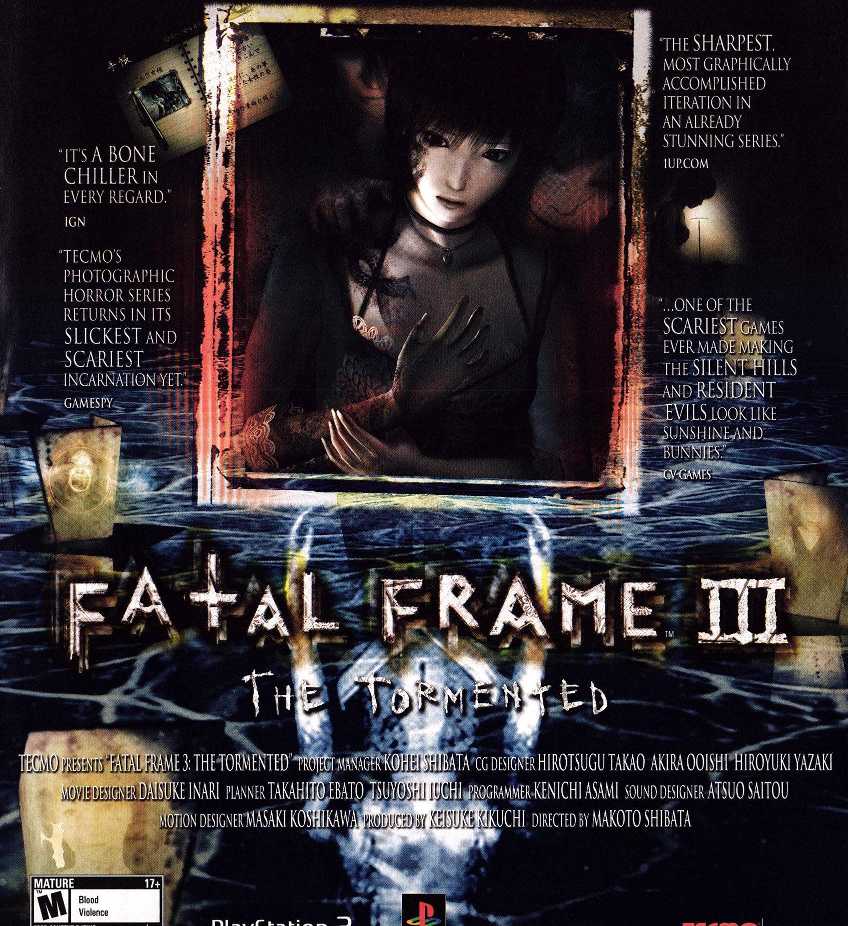
RATING [●●●●○]



CRYSTAL BALL

Wonder where all *Ratchet*'s substance went? Insomniac is likely focusing more heavily on PS3—specifically *I-8*, the sci-fi-ish shooter shown off (in what was probably one of the only actual gameplay videos) during Sony's press conference at E3.

"THE CREEPIEST GAME ON THE IMMEDIATE HORIZON, PERIOD."
YAHOO! GAMES



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MATURE 17+
M
Blood
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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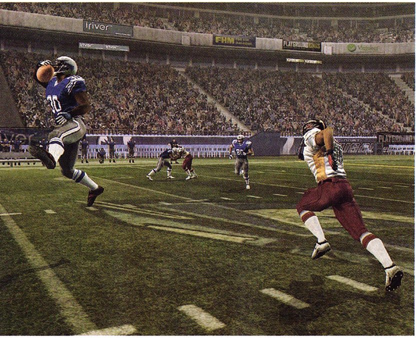
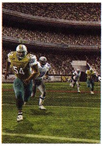
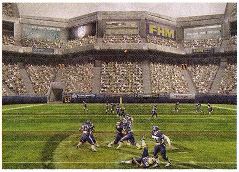
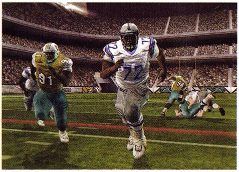




ONLINE MAYHEM
The best part about *Blitz*'s online mode is that you can have two custom teams face off against each other. So all that hard work you put into your team during the campaign mode can be used in the online mode as well, and against a much more consistent opponent.





BLITZ: THE LEAGUE

FOOTBALL IS FUN AGAIN

Let's put this right on the table, shall we? Losing the NFL license was the best thing to ever happen to the *Blitz* series. There was absolutely no point for Midway to maintain the license when all it did was hamper what *Blitz* does best—provide a fast-paced, over-the-top football game that just about anyone with a passing interest in the sport can enjoy.

That's why *Blitz: The League* is good: It takes the series back to its roots and makes it even more outlandish and brazen than before. It's almost like a big unfriendly gesture (which may or may not use the middle finger) directed toward the NFL, and it adds much-needed character and intensity to a representation of the sport that has become so watered down, static, and just flat-out boring.

Actually, the new elements added on top of the classic *Blitz* gameplay are directly connected to things that the NFL would normally scoff at. The clash meter is probably the biggest example of this because it fundamentally changes the way you'd play a traditional football game. The meter encourages you to land literally bone-crunching hits on other players to injure them; this is further egged on by the fact that the other team usually has only one star player. On offense, the clash meter uses a bullet-time effect that helps you dodge all kinds of tackles, and thankfully, you can't really abuse it or the turbo since they both drain pretty fast, so it blends in very well with the old-school *Blitz* gameplay.

This also goes for the new campaign mode, which takes you through the seedy underbelly of professional sports with topics that range from hookers to steroids. Most of this stuff is pretty over the top, but at the same time, it keeps the campaign mode interesting, and there are just enough options involved—such as training your players to improve their stats and making coaching choices—to keep you drawn in from a football simulation standpoint. Unfortunately, it takes the AI a little while to really get ramped up in this mode—you can use the same few plays repeatedly to burn the defense—but once the defense starts to kick in, you really need to know your stuff. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS New features are great additions to *Blitz* gameplay. Just plain fun
CONS The campaign mode could be just a little more robust. AI is weak in spots

Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●○]

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MATURE 17+
M
Blood and Gore
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Violence
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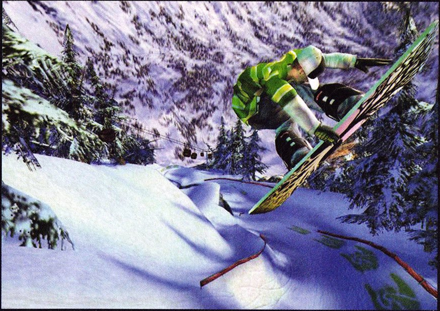
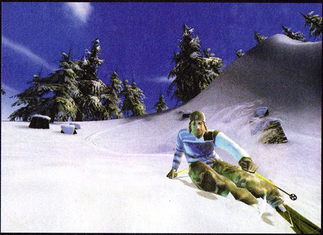
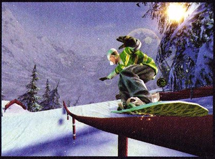
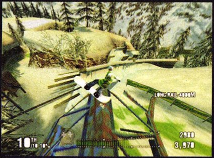
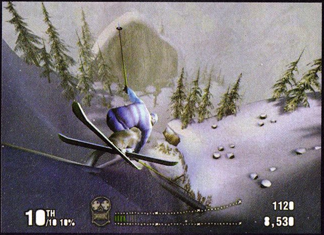










SSX ON TOUR

HEAVY METAL SNOWBOARDING

Any game that opens with Iron Maiden's "Run to the Hills" is worthy of attention, particularly if it's accompanied by stylish hand-drawn visuals and the most gratuitous overuse of the rock horns outside of a Kiss concert. *SSX on Tour* is totally frickin' *metal*, and, as such, is quite dramatically different from previous games in the series.

The changes begin with the presentation, but there have been some fundamental alterations to this fourth game in the franchise that may jar longtime fans. To start with, you no longer play as the established characters. Moby, Psymon, and all of the rest of them remain as a recognizable presence, but now you play as "you," thanks to the ubiquitous EA character-creation gizmo. There are plenty of puffy coats, hairdos, and baggy pants to personalize your extreme Ken or Barbie doll with, but sadly, the switch to full customization has eliminated the charm. If you're not familiar with the *SSX* roster, the significance of being challenged to a race by one of the "stars" (who are now all grown up, it seems) is completely lost on you. Such is the dichotomy of the new game. The changes estrange fans, but at the same time they rely on an intimate knowledge of the series' history to make their full impact.

For many, *SSX Tricky* is the absolute pinnacle of fantasy extreme-sports gameplay. In truth, it still is, and it's interesting to note that the "fantasy" aspect of *SSX* is now all but gone. There are no more crazy pinball levels, no zany wind tubes, turbo pads, or bumpers. It's more of a "pure" snowboarding (or skiing, the addition of which is fairly insignificant) game than ever. That's not to say that *On Tour* is a bad game, far from it, it's just not the game that many of us fell in love with. What it has gained in visual style and flair (and it's absolutely *dripping* with it), it has lost in personality.

Thankfully, the controls are still perfect, and the sense of barely controllable velocity is still beautifully portrayed. It seems that the new *SSX* development crew has been watching what the Criterion guys have been doing with *Burnout*, as there are a number of tricks that seem very familiar. The subtle blurring of the screen at high velocity makes a huge difference, and the "near miss" mechanic that gives you points for not quite knocking over noncompeting snowboarders is pure *Burnout*. Also, the use of a dramatic slow-mo camera during monster tricks has a significant effect on the drama of those big leaps.

It's an exhilarating and stylish experience, to be sure, but it's sad to note that if this had been the first game in a *new* series, it probably wouldn't go down quite so well. EA's desire to reinvent is admirable, but given that this is the fourth outing for a franchise beloved for being different, the move toward the conventional does nothing but hurt it. « *John Davison*

PROS Stylish graphics, metal soundtrack, awesome control
CONS Lacks the personality of previous games

Pub. EA Sports Big **Dev.** EA Canada **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●●◐

HOW METAL?

Iron Maiden on the title screen, Dio in-game, rock horn graphics every-frickin'-where, and different cuts of squealing, shredding metal guitar solos every time you meet an objective. The game even lets rip with a monstrous power chord whenever you're in first place. How much more metal could it be? None. None more metal.

NHL 2K6

WE DON'T NEED NO STEENKING ESPN BRANDING

Another year, another great hockey sim from the folks at Visual Concepts and Kush Games. *NHL 2K6* continues to build on the stunning legacy of the past few seasons by adding one major new feature—a feature that changes video hockey completely.

Icon passing is where it's at. Now, rather than wiggling the analog stick in an attempt to half-aim each pass, which slows your play in front of the net, a quick click brings up an icon beside each player. Now the tic-tac-toe is as easy as tapping each face button in succession, giving you lightning-quick, accurate passes and an immediate windup for the shot at the end of the play. This is what it's like in the real game, and this is what it should be like on consoles.

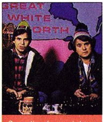
NHL 2K6 has taken a step back in some areas, however—mostly in its overall presentation. There is very little in the way of broadcast-style camera angles and play stoppages to be found in *2K6*. The arena graphics are hurting as well—the ugly cardboard spectators almost disappear during play, making each arena look empty. And the commentary...well, it's not horrible, just repetitive. Plus, it's a good two seconds behind the play at all times.

Still, at the root of *NHL 2K6* lies the best hockey simulator available on any system right now, complete with an endless amount of gameplay sliders that allow you to tweak the settings to your liking. It easily blows away the competition yet again. While EA's *NHL 06* makes great strides in the right direction this year, 2K Games continues to ripple the twine with every outing. « Greg Sewart

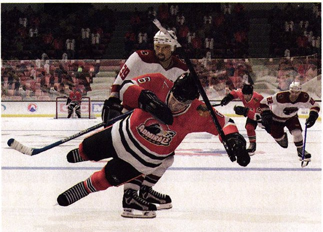
VERDICT 2K Sports still offers the best hockey at the best price. All that's needed now is a face-lift.

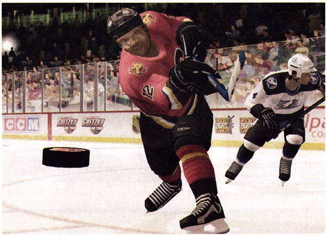
Pub. 2K Sports **Dev.** Visual Concepts/Kush Games **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $19.99

RATING ○○○○●



Canadian fans might be interested to know that the commentary team for *NHL 2K6* consists of Bob Cole and Harry Neale, one of the broadcast teams for the CBC's *Hockey Night* in Canada.





GRETZKY NHL '06

THE GREAT ONE SHOULD RETIRE...AGAIN

So I was just playing a game of *Gretzky '06*. The Devils' center was coming into my zone, with two defensemen on him. He moved the puck through the legs of one (I don't mean between the guy's legs, literally *through* them) and his stick through the legs of the other. Then he fell on his ass (though the check I threw missed by a mile).

Next the puck slowly slid away from the net, where the Devils' winger took a swing at it. Though the puck was about four feet ahead of this guy's stick, the shot flew toward Fleury in net...who dove for it so hard that his torso actually went through the ice. The puck managed to pass through the chest of the sprawling Devils center and find the back of the net.

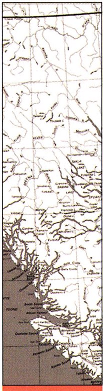
I could continue by telling you about all the different gameplay modes offered in *Gretzky NHL '06*, such as the strange Gretzky vs. Gretzky mode, in which you can invoke "99 Time" to summon the Great One to the ice as a sixth man. But does it really matter? When the on-ice action is this broken, all the bells and whistles in the world won't disguise the fact that you're playing a subpar game of hockey.

Go with 2K Sports' superb *NHL 2K6*. Or even EA Sports' *NHL 06*. Both are much better than *Gretzky*. « Greg Sewart

VERDICT A buggy mess that should be avoided in favor of *NHL 2K6* or *NHL 06*.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** 989 Sports **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

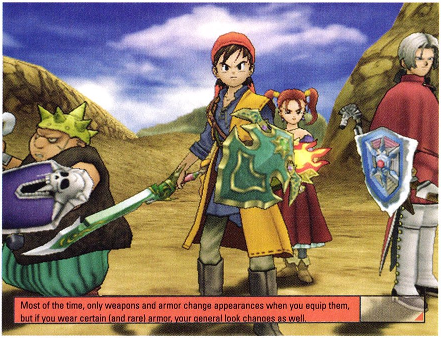
RATING ○●●●●



Some hospitals in British Columbia have noticed a small baby boom this year. Many are attributing it to the 2004-2005 NHL season being canceled.

DRAGON QUEST VIII: JOURNEY OF THE CURSED KING

HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES



Most of the time, only weapons and armor change appearances when you equip them, but if you wear certain (and rare) armor, your general look changes as well.

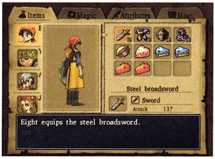
Yangus doubles over laughing!

King Trode

Master Rylus is the fellow who taught that accursed Dhoulmagus his magic.

Jessica

Not this, again!
Of course I'm sad!
I can't believe I even have to say it!



Steel broadsword

Sword

Attack 137

Eight equips the steel broadsword.

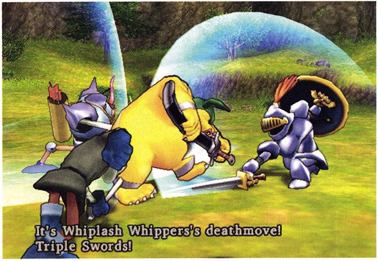
You made a strong medicine!

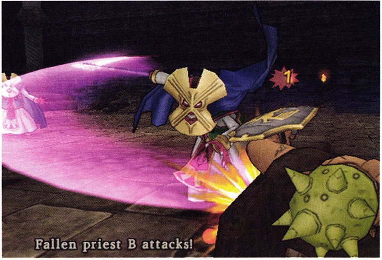
Inevitably, old people whine about whatever comes to mind. In the case of old gamers, they tend to spout the adage, "Games were better back in the olden days, when they were all gameplay and no graphics." At this point in the conversation, one would normally nod his head, and the elderly would then muse, "They should take [insert name of classic game] and rerelease it with modern graphics." Well, that's pretty much what happened with *Dragon Quest VIII*, and you know what? It works.

Previous *Dragon Quest* games held oodles and oodles of hardcore, old-school RPG gameplay but were also paired with simple graphics that, on occasion, made them look like amateur fan projects rather than professionally developed games. This trend has ended with *DQ8*, as Level-5 (creator of the fine *Dark Cloud* franchise) worked hard on the production values (overall visuals, battle animations, character expressions) and made *DQ8* one of the best-looking games on the PS2 to date. *DQ8* represents perhaps the most impressive use of cel shading in a game; it looks so good, in fact, that I'd actually take the time to just look around and absorb the scenery.

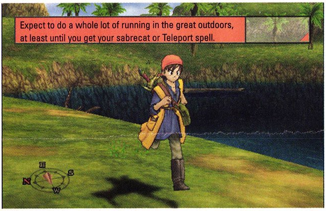
Yet despite its 21st-century visuals, *DQ8* maintains the series' core gameplay. Combat is still turn based, and random battles remain plentiful. Yeah, you get a story with some cut-scenes, but don't expect a philosophical treatise (hi, *Xenosaga*!) or J-pop dance number (how ya doin', *FFX-2*!). The cut-scenes tell just enough to advance the story (a pretty basic one involving you, a cursed king, and a world-spanning quest to go after an evil jester) and give a bit of color to the world; otherwise, you're back to doing two very basic things: Exploring the world and killing the monsters in it. Unique to the American *DQ8* release is the use of voice in significant cut-scenes, which will likely be a bone of contention for some players since the voice actors portray a very deliberate form of British melodrama. I enjoyed the goofy, lighthearted voices, but people who watched me play would comment on how grating they are. However, both fans and detractors can agree that the voice of Yangus, the lovable bandit in your party, is spot on. But other than the voices, the menu, and some other tweaks, the American release is just as hefty and old school as its original Japanese incarnation.

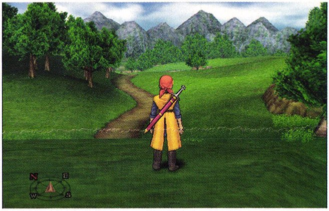
To say that *DQ8* is vast is quite the understatement. In order to finish the very first quest, in which you're asked to retrieve an item from a nearby cave, I had to take a good two to three hours just to level up enough to survive inside. By the 34th hour, I had just acquired a boat that lets me cross the ocean. At this rate, I might be able to complete the main story by hour 55, and I think I'm working

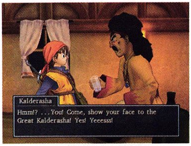

It's Whiplash Whippers's deathmove!
Triple Swords!


Fallen priest B attacks!

Expect to do a whole lot of running in the great outdoors, at least until you get your sabrecat or Teleport spell.

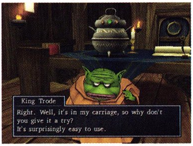




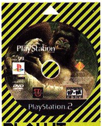

Kalderasha
Hmm!? ...You! Come, show your face to the Great Kalderasha! Yes! Yeeesss!

Press ✕ to talk.

Jessica
Anyway. We'd better ask Emma's grandmother to tell us her fairy tale!


King Trode
Right. Well, it's in my carriage, so why don't you give it a try?
It's surprisingly easy to use.

*: Not now!
I've almost got this game in the bag!



PLAY IT

through it a bit fast. That's not counting the time I could be gambling in the casino, gathering items to combine in the alchemy pot for secret goodies, or fighting special monsters to recruit for my monster team. While one could quibble that this is admittedly a slower-paced game than most, fans and newbies alike can relish the fact that even though *DQ8* delivers a whole lot of game that will last a good while, it's still not as glacially paced as past *DQ* titles.

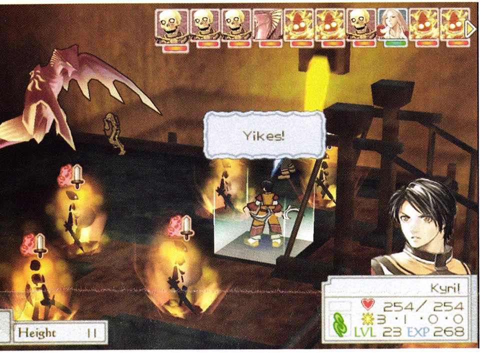
Another big change in *DQ8* is that the battle system now lets you target specific enemies. Regarding another development, some *DQ* veterans might be bothered by how *DQ8* handles character advancement; there is no longer a job system, like in previous games—rather, you now get skill points that you can distribute among five skills per character (three weapons, bare fists, and one unique skill). The number of skill points you earn varies (sometimes you'll get as many as nine or as few as three when you level up), and the gap between new abilities means that you'll have to decide whether you want to slowly gain abilities in multiple fields or focus on one or two skills to gain abilities faster. True, it's a lot faster to level up skills as opposed to leveling jobs in previous games, but fans who appreciated that job system might be annoyed at how much simpler this skill system is.

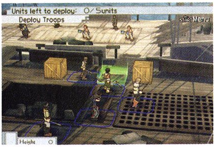
A final note to emphasize just how big *DQ8* is: The landscape could be considered a character in itself—it rivals the state of San Andreas in size and detail. It's one of the few landscapes where you can look in any direction and realize that the mountain in the distance isn't scenery, but something you can venture to and climb to a great height, and then look down and trace your path as far as you can see. The game world is so big that you have the option of cutting down travel time through the use of items such as a tiger mount, a summoned bird, and a Teleportation spell. By the end, you'll have wandered through forests, deserts, ruins, moon worlds, snow-capped mountains, pirate caves, and dragon villages. This grand landscape is something that embodies *Dragon Quest VIII*, and though its gameplay may still feel like it was developed in 1995 rather than 2005, the game neatly exhibits the PS2's original creed: "Live in your world, play in ours." « *Thierry Nguyen*

VERDICT It's a massive, old-school, epic RPG that at times is a bit too old school.

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Square Enix/Level-5 **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●◐]





SUIKODEN TACTICS

BRAIN POWER, ENGAGE!

How many more "[name of popular series] Tactics" titles are there going to be? I've got a theory about the proliferation of strategy-RPG games. I think that as long as the grid-based battles play right, fans of the genre will be willing to put up with substandard presentation. *Suikoden Tactics*, for one, definitely seems to be operating on this assumption.

Suikoden Tactics is a lot like most any other strategy-RPG you've played. Wade through story line. Amass characters. Equip them. Place them on a grid. Move them around, square by square, and fight mean things for hours on end.

Since it's *Suikoden*, you soon end up with more characters than you know what to do with. You can send some of them off on quests à la *Final Fantasy Tactics*. Later in the game, you'll be given the option of switching characters out midbattle. But since the character you swap out can't reenter, you'll want to use this only as a last-ditch tactic.

But the major gameplay mechanic that separates this from other "[whatever] Tactics" games is the fact that characters can color the field with certain elemental properties. When they're standing on their affiliated color, they get huge stat boosts and periodically regain health. When they're standing on the opposite color, they get the crap knocked out of them.

This adds an extra bit of strategy and fun to battles. But some of the design choices detract from them. The camera setup makes it really hard to understand what's going on. I've fired on allies. I've cast spells on blank spaces. And although it's important to know which direction a character is facing, it's really hard to tell.

This is in part because the cel-shaded character models are fugly, looking more like formless blobs of color than anything resembling humans. And the lengthy story scenes are told using close-ups of these formless blobs, making the scenes painfully boring. Add to that the fact that the story is so meandering and confusing that I had no idea what was going on, and *Suikoden Tactics*' between-battle action really drags the whole thing down. *« Chris Kohler*

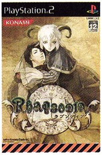
SHINY The grid-coloring and switching systems add an extra depth to battle

DULL The characters are ass-ugly; it's really hard to see things on the grid

APPRAISAL Gameplay works when it's not broken, but awful story scenes and graphics make for boring stretches

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Konami **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●○○]



SUE-EE-WHAT-DEN?

In Japan, *Suikoden Tactics* doesn't share a name with the RPG series that spawned it. It's just called *Rhapsodia*. So our game's name is in Japanese, and theirs is in English.

Crystal City
Main Street
Menu
World Map
START Map

ROMANCING SAGA

MAYBE CHOICE ISN'T ALWAYS GOOD

Longtime RPG players find the idea of choice a romantic one. After all, the RPG is one of the most linear genres out there, rarely allowing the gamer to go off on his own and do whatever he wants outside of the odd side quest.

The idea behind *Romancing SaGa* is that you have nothing but choice. Choose one of eight different protagonists' stories to play. Choose which characters do and don't join your party. Choose to go on every mission you learn of or avoid them and stick to the main story. Heck, you don't even have to do all the story-specific missions to finish some characters' quests. Even the battle system allows you to equip multiple weapons, giving you a choice of attack sets to use during each skirmish.

The result, though, is a complete lack of direction in most cases. You'll spend so much time figuring out what to do next, going to each town and talking to everyone in the hopes of finding a new mission, that you start to lose the overall feel and flow of the main story.

Menu
ニューロード
Pause

And the battle system, despite the choice of various weapons, feels old and clunky—more like the games we were playing 10 years ago than anything new and exciting. The frequency of enemy encounters doesn't help the situation, either, as you'll find yourself just sitting there tapping the X button over and over, wishing you could do a bit of exploring without wasting time on useless battles.

My suggestion to you is that you practice your right to choose and find a different RPG to spend your time with this holiday season. *« Greg Sewart*

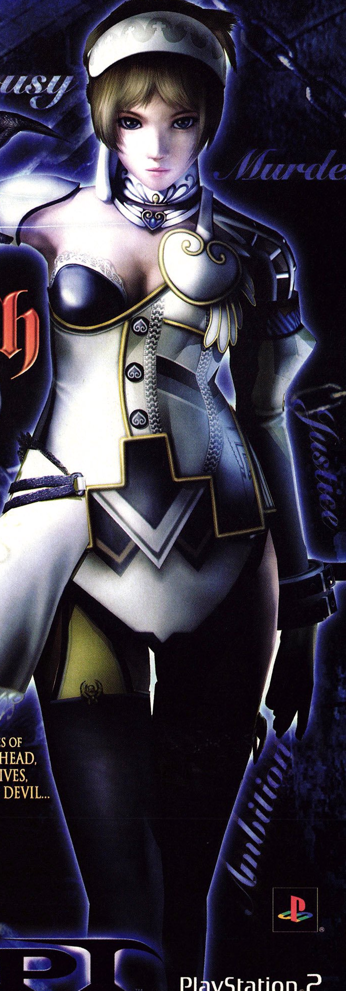
The *SaGa* series has been around for years. The first U.S. title, renamed *Final Fantasy Legend*, was released for the Game Boy in 1989.

VERDICT Too much choice, not enough direction, and the characters are really creepy looking.

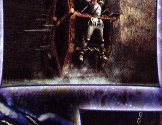
Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Square Enix **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●◐○○]

TECMO | 100% GAMES


Betrayal
Jealousy
Friendship
Murder
Humiliation
Justice
Ambition

hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.



Pendulum
Mega Rock
Washpan
✕ Cancel

45Damage 5sec Charge 1.0Ark Multiplier 3 blo

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MATURE 17+
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Blood
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TRAPT™

PlayStation®2

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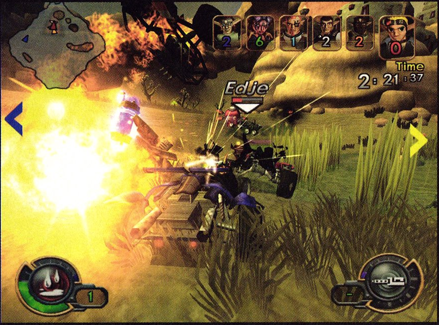


PlayStation
PlayStation 2

PLAY IT

JAK X: COMBAT RACING

JAKKED UP AND READY TO GO

For the past week I've been eating nothing but crow. The source of my new diet: *Jak X: Combat Racing*—who knew it could possibly be this good?

At the game's March announcement I rolled my eyes and cynically wondered if Vivendi Universal was going to acquire (and essentially kill) the *Jak* franchise as it did with *Crash Bandicoot*. True, developer Naughty Dog did an exceptional job with *Crash Team Racing*, but that was seven years ago. Could the company pull it off again?

Yes. *Jak X* is a polished, top-of-the-line combat-racing game that hits on pretty much all cylinders, making for a fun, consistent ride from start to finish.

There are three basic reasons for this. First, the finely choreographed and voice-acted story establishes believable motivation. Krew, one of the villains from *Jak II*, has died, and Jak and Daxter, among others, are called to the reading of the will. Posthumously appearing as a hologram, Krew reveals his wish to win the Kras City Championship. Since he knows that those he's gathered wouldn't race for him willingly, Krew confesses that the wine the group just drank in his honor is poisoned and the only way to get the antidote is to win the race. There's your premise: Jak is dying and must race to save himself. That's motivation.

Second, driving in *Jak X* is terrific. The buggy-style vehicles handle intuitively, with a control set that makes sense, especially given the number of things you can do (use turbo, jump, and, of course, engage in combat). Of particular note is the powersliding that's easy to execute and maintain. After a thankfully brief, though useful, tutorial, you'll jump into a variety of races (more on this in a minute). As the racing progresses, you'll upgrade the basics—engine power, acceleration, armor, and so on—and acquire new parts like fenders and tires. *Jak X* stops short in the upgrades by not letting you tweak things like steering and bounce, and it would have been nice if the upgrades had come with context. You'll win a tire upgrade, but so what? Is this a better tire for snow or street? You won't know and the game won't tell you. Similarly, while the choice of vehicles grows as you progress, there's no clear reason you would want one buggy over another.

Third, the races in *Jak X* are just plain fun. Aside from the basic races to win, there are deathmatches and artifact-collecting races. I especially enjoyed the artifact collecting because it felt most like a sport—the enemy AI is competitive, which makes the race to collect the most artifacts all the more real. Track design is competent for the most part, though you'll probably want to turn up the brightness and contrast, as some of the darker tracks' color palettes can lead to confusion and crashes. Because the game is long—four basic stages with about a dozen races in each—some of the later races will seem repetitive. This is a trap that all racing games fall into, so *Jak X*'s race variety works in its favor.

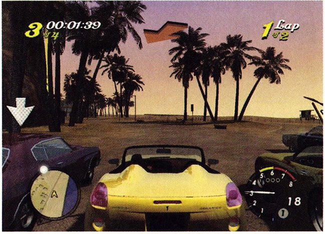
By the way, you don't need to be a *Jak* fan to enjoy *Jak X*. You'll want it for the pure unpretentious fun a proper combat-racing game should provide. I'm just relieved that what could easily have been a gimmicky game isn't. « *Tom Byron*

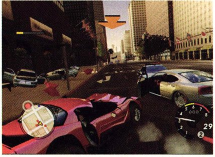
VERDICT The most fun you can have racing and watching vehicles blow up since *Burnout Revenge*.

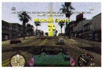
Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Naughty Dog **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

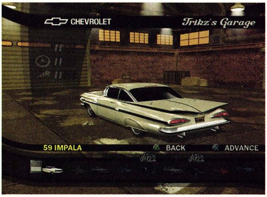
RATING [●●●●◐]

Multiplayer in *Jak X* is a lagless joy. Four of us tested several races, including deathmatch and artifact collecting, on a LAN and experienced *no difference* from single player. Nice.









L.A. RUSH

JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES…YOU KNOW THE REST

Imagine if *Need for Speed Underground 2, Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2, Midnight Club 3,* and *Burnout 3* made sweet, sweet love. Besides resulting in one of the hottest Internet videos ever, this action would likely lead to the creation of Midway's *L.A. Rush.*

I don't want to mislead you, dear reader. *L.A. Rush* doesn't manage to better—or even match—the aforementioned racing giants. What we have here is an urban street-racing game that takes all the best bits from the genre standards and combines them into a decent racer that lacks focus and polish.

You, as "Trikz," are on a quest through the underground racing world to find out who stole all your pimped-out rides and to get 'em back—by racing. And the variety of racing events you partake in is actually pretty nice. From standard street racing to trying to get a repo'd ride back to home base with as little damage as possible, *L.A. Rush* does try to offer something new every few minutes.

It's the technical issues and inconsistencies that hurt the game. Despite the motion blur used to hide the framerate, *L.A. Rush* just never feels really fast. And the strange collision issues really frustrate me. Move into oncoming traffic and you just bounce off other cars, while hitting traffic going the same direction as you results in a fiery crash. You can bounce off trees without losing speed, but if you drop a wheel into an inch of water along the beach, your car will flip end over end. Not a pretty way to lose a race.

L.A. Rush comes agonizingly close to being exceptional but falls short in too many areas to be more than average. « *Greg Sewart*

VERDICT Tries to bring together the best of the street-racing genre but doesn't quite manage greatness.

Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ○○○●●

CELEBREALITY Orlando Jones and Bill Bellamy both voice characters in *L.A. Rush.* Racing isn't new to either actor, though. Jones starred in the awful *Biker Boyz,* while Bellamy was one of the main characters on the equally awful *Fastlane* television show.

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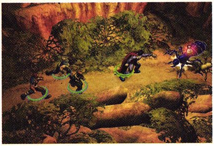
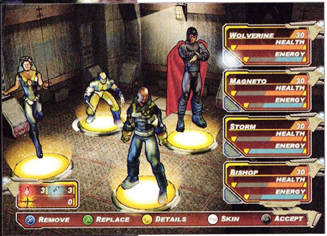




X-MEN LEGENDS II: RISE OF APOCALYPSE

X-CELLENT

When a publisher doesn't send us reviewable code until a game is on store shelves, alarms go off. Perhaps the company knows its game is subpar and wants to move a few copies before the bad reviews hit. Or maybe it made one of those silly exclusive-review cover deals (*OPM* excepted, of course!).

X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse came to us late, and since I hadn't seen a review cover, my first thought was "uh-oh." For the second time this month (see my *Jak X* review on page 120), I was proved very wrong.

Because *XML2* is a truly terrific action-RPG that serves as an example of what a game sequel ought to be. It's better than the original, and it's absorbing, well balanced, and thorough, with enough challenge and variety to keep you busy for the 20-plus hours it'll take to play through.

XML2 plays very much like the first game did—think *Champions of Norrath* meets Marvel—and features some key improvements, most notably (and appreciated), the autoleveling and online (co-op and melee) play.

What makes *XML2* so engaging is the careful balance between the different characters and the fact that it encourages you to work as a team. You select from (ultimately, after unlocks) 16 playables, including members of both the X-Men and the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants (they're working together to bring down Apocalypse). After some trial and error—and having fun just seeing what everyone can do—I settled on Magneto (he's a flyer who put the "super" in supervillain and can make a mean bridge), Colossus (he's a power guy: dumb but strong and needed for moving the big stuff), Storm (she can put out fires and has some nifty range powers), and Wolverine (he's nimble for the fast kills) through Acts 3 and 4. Yes, this worked for me, but other combinations will work just as well—and that's the joy. It's the sign of a well-balanced game when the characters are so markedly different that you're motivated to try different combinations. It also speaks to the diverse nature of the X-Men universe that the characters have been so well thought out that an RPG seems like a natural fit. (Consider my vote cast in favor of Activision expanding the *XML* game world to the larger Marvel universe. An Avengers game would be cool.)

That said, I don't know what all the fuss is over the fact that you can play as Brotherhood characters. While the idea is conceptually pretty cool (sure, who wouldn't want to play as ol' Mags?) and lends itself to a great story (it pulls off the interactive-comic vibe very well), *XML2* gives you no reason to pick the evil dudes over their good counterparts: There is no "villain" or "hero" track in the game, and so it comes down to picking the right players for your team.

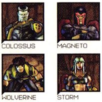
Some might find *XML2* a bit on the easy side. There's some truth to this, especially when you level up into the 30s and hit your combos right. This is due largely to the fact that the enemies don't seem to share the same level of balance as the heroes, and so at times it seems like you're fighting the same guys over and over. Also, boss battles are particularly easy once you figure out the pattern. The formulaic level design contributes to this perception of ease: Go in a room, fight, go to the next room, fight, etc.

With the superb *The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction*, the fun *Ultimate Spider-Man*, and even the surprising *The Fantastic 4*, 2005 has mostly been a great year for Marvel superhero games. However, *X-Men Legends II* gets the crown. « *Tom Byron*

VERDICT With balanced gameplay, lots of depth, 20-plus-hour play time, and online play, this is what sequels should be: better than the original.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Raven **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

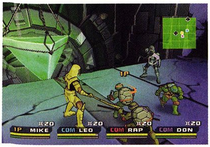


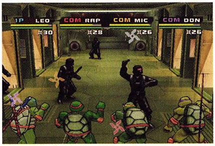
MY DREAM TEAM

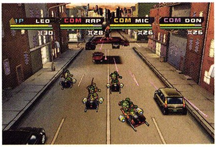
For Acts 3 and 4, I stuck with these four, occasionally swapping Rogue for Storm and Juggernaut for Colossus.

ONLINE X-CEEDS X-PECTATIONS

Playing *XML2's* multiplayer modes, either online or the old-fashioned way, is highly recommended. We tried all the melee and co-op games (two players on a broadband connection) and had plenty of fun, and in the case of co-op, found much faster gameplay with just a little lag (minor hiccups here and there, but not enough to be a problem). Nice work, Raven.







TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 3: MUTANT NIGHTMARE

NOT QUITE A NIGHTMARE, BUT NOT GOOD EITHER

Konami's third *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* game for PS2 in as many years still isn't very good. Even worse, the company makes the mistake of including the best *Turtles* arcade game to illustrate just how comprehensively *Mutant Nightmare* fails to live up to that game's quality.

Though the bonus game is based on the arcade version of *Turtles in Time* and not the slightly superior SNES port, it's still a great way to kill some time, especially now that credit feeding is as simple as tapping a button. The music and sound effects have all been changed, apparently due to rights issues, and the result is frankly a little embarrassing—especially the voice acting, which sounds like the actors were directed to be as lame as possible. Other than that, though, everything is present and correct, and best of all, you don't have to play any of the regular game to access it.

Which is good, because—did I mention already?—it's much better than the "real" game it's attached to. *Mutant Nightmare*'s fighting (which is all there is to do) lacks much skill or depth, and it uses only a few simple combos so the game is more accessible to the younger crowd that watches the show. But why fight at all when the computer will do it for you? You can beat most of the short stages by just hanging back and letting the other three omnipresent, AI-controlled turtles do all the work.

Mutant Nightmare has improvements over its predecessors here and there, like a better camera and nice graphics, but when the basic game is this boring, that's about as useful as replacing the air freshener in a house built in the sewers « *Nich Maragos*

PROS It has the flavor of the series with nicer animation to boot; inexpensive

CONS Too dull to actually play

VEREDICT Sadly skippable once again

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Konami **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $29.99

RATING [○○●●●]

Confused about where the Technodrome, Rat King, and Bebop and Rocksteady fights went? If you haven't played the arcade version of *Turtles in Time* in a while, you might be surprised to learn that those fights weren't added to the game until its SNES port.

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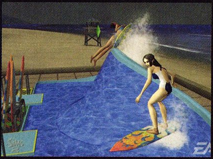
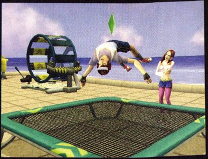
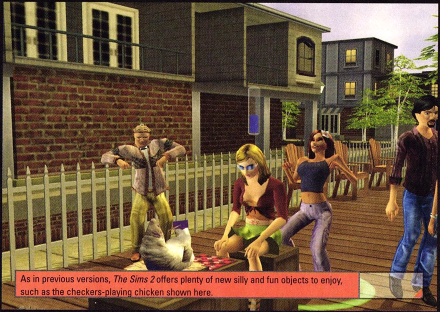
THE SIMS 2

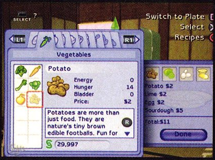
BURNIN' DOWN THE HOUSE







As in previous versions, *The Sims 2* offers plenty of new silly and fun objects to enjoy, such as the checkers-playing chicken shown here.



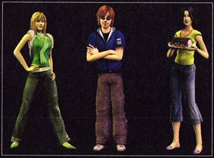
Potato

Energy	0
Hunger	14
Bladder	0
Price:	$2

Potatoes are more than just food. They are nature's tiny brown edible footballs. Fun for

§ 29,997

Potato $2
Lime $2
Egg $2
Sourdough $5
Total:$11



The other day I bought a different brand of ice cream. I didn't like the first bowl that I ate, but I couldn't figure out why. It didn't taste bad, it wasn't too icy—it just wasn't as good as ice cream should be. And *The Sims 2* is kind of like that. There's nothing wrong with it, really, but it's just not as good as other games in the franchise (ignoring *The Urbz*) have been.

Part of this is because it's less of a change than one would expect from a game that has a "2" tacked on the end. The PC version of *The Sims 2* incorporated some huge changes, including moving to 3D from 2D and getting an "aging engine" that allowed the player to build families that survived for generations. But the console version of *The Sims* was already in 3D, and the hardware isn't strong enough to support the aging engine, so you won't be able to watch your Sims grow up, procreate, and grow old.

So what *is* new? The major addition is that every Sim is created with an overall motivation, driving his or her wants and needs. Your choice, which can range from wealth to creativity, will dictate what your Sim will want to do. It adds a nice amount of depth. Also new is the character control—now you can control each character directly, as you do in the PC version, which is infinitely preferable to the old way of picking a spot for the Sim to move to.

As one expects from an EA game, *The Sims 2* has a lot more in the realm of content. You'll find new locations, new items, added depth in the character-customization system, a new clothing-design system, and even advanced food-preparation options. In fact, so much has been packed in that the PS2 is left chugging a lot of the time, particularly when you enter menus such as Buy, Build, or Save.

But despite all this new content, there hasn't been that much of an advance in gameplay: The Sims still set their stoves on fire, the toilets still clog incessantly, and people still drop their plates and trash wherever they happen to be standing. In other words, a lot of the game still involves baby-sitting adults. And anytime I started to enjoy myself, something silly inevitably came up and frustrated me all over again, such as the bathroom accident I had when my roommates happened to take back-to-back showers (because, apparently, urinating on oneself is a better option than using the toilet with other people in the bathroom).

The game is not bad. If you like *The Sims* and feel a desire for more items and locations and whatnot, then this will fulfill your need. But the basic formula hasn't changed, and for some of you (including me), it's probably getting old. « *Dana Jongewaard*

VERDICT Instead of playing God, you're running the rat race.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Games **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

SPICE CHANNEL

While *The Sims* franchise has always been considered family friendly, parents of younger players should be aware that *The Sims 2* has gotten a bit racier—one of the tracks, the Romance track, is pretty much all about getting it on with other Sims.

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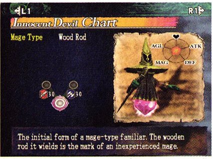
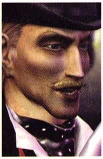


The initial form of a mage-type familiar. The wooden rod it wields is the mark of an inexperienced mage.



Evo Crystal

CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS

THE 3D CURSE CONTINUES

If you're a *Castlevania* fan, you're probably already aware of a curse that's been plaguing the series since it first made the jump into three dimensions back on the Nintendo 64. The curse is that there hasn't been a single great 3D *Castlevania* game, and sadly, *Curse of Darkness* doesn't buck the trend. It could be and should be argued that *Lament of Innocence—Curse of Darkness*' predecessor—was the first *good* 3D *Castlevania* game because it showed that the formula that's been used for the series over the past few years could work in a 3D environment, but *Lament* needed to be expanded upon and refined before it could be classified as "great."

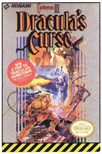
Curse of Darkness definitely expands on what *Lament of Innocence* brought to the table, but it does little in the way of refining it (and none of that refinement shows up in the fighting mechanics, which weren't really changed at all). And the expanding that *Curse of Darkness* does actually ends up being more of a negative than a positive. *Curse of Darkness*' world was made larger than the one in *Lament* for the purpose of adding more exploration elements, but most of the exploring in the game proves to be unfruitful or just plain not worth it. And the fact that you have to traverse more similar-looking hallways and fight the same type of enemies over and over again in more areas doesn't make the game any better—it's just more tedious. In some senses, *Lament of Innocence*'s streamlined level design would've been welcomed more than the level design in *Curse*—mostly because it seems that much of the castle and surrounding areas in *Curse* were put in just for the sake of expanding the game world and not for any real functional or practical purpose.

Where *Curse of Darkness* succeeds is with its secondary features—the devil forging and the item-creation system. The devils you summon in the game are incredibly helpful—they're the reason you're able to beat most of the bosses in the game—it's just too bad there aren't more of them with even more diverse abilities. Much of the game's entertainment comes from wanting to level up the innocent devils and see how they change as they become more powerful. The same goes for the weapon- and armor-creation systems—it's really fun to go through the game and collect materials to see what sorts of weapons you can make next. Too bad the basic gameplay doesn't stand out as well. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Devil forging, weapon-creation system, story is slightly better than *Lament*'s
CONS Fighting pretty much unchanged, graphics below par, world is boring to explore

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Konami **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]



BLOODLINES

You'll see a few familiar faces in *Curse of Darkness*—one of them being Trevor Belmont, the hero from *Castlevania III*. Fans will be happy to know that the series' story line ties into this game's pretty well, making the story more entertaining than it probably should be.

14376
694
COMBO! MAN!
CROWD
Ain't too proud to plead

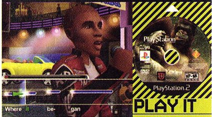
KARAOKE REVOLUTION PARTY

NOT TO BE CONFUSE WITH A PANTS PARTY

I find it interesting that *Karaoke Revolution* has gone in such a different direction with *Party*. The game is obviously focused on multiplayer, with a load of different game types for two to eight players, along with different options for one- or two-microphone setups. It's nice that the designers are playing up karaoke's unmatched power as a party icebreaker, but it seems the single player is likely to feel a little left out.

For example, rather than working your way through a set playlist as in previous games, you just take your pick of individual songs and sort of work at your own pace. This being the case, it's no longer possible to really "beat" the game—which can be good or bad depending on how you look at it. Sure, the new reward system—based on the number of gold, platinum, and diamond records you earn—requires much more of a time investment if you want to unlock everything. But most of what you unlock isn't worth much; the lineup primarily consists of goofy outfits for created characters, with only a few songs sprinkled in.

The new additions, like the voice-controlled minigames and the sing-and-dance mode (in which very simple *DDR*-style arrows scroll below the lyrics), are good for a laugh but don't have much staying power, furthering the impression that the game really is intended solely as a once-in-a-while experience. Put the novelty features aside and it feels like little more than another expansion pack: a decent song list with only a couple standouts (e.g., "Take on Me" by A-Ha) and...not much else. Now, I like to sing, so decent is good enough for me—but your mileage may vary. If you're more likely to go solo than host a sing-along, you'd probably be better off picking up one of the earlier editions instead. « *Joe Rybicki*



VERDICT As you might expect, it's great for parties, but the solo modes leave a bit to be desired.

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Harmonix **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

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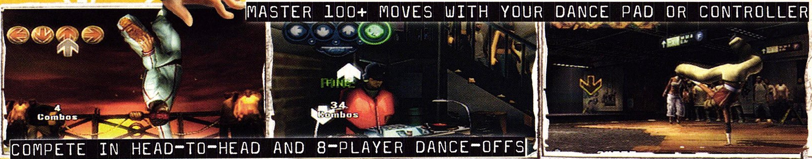

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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PlayStation 2

A2M

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RESIDENT EVIL 4

3,500 DAYS LATER

OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

GAME OF THE MONTH

Killing this dude is optional! But real gamers take him out.

Even though Capcom was the company that kick-started the modern survival-horror genre, the *Resident Evil* franchise had started to fall by the wayside. Never mind the solid *RE*, the pretty good *RE2*, and the darn good *RE Code: Veronica*. Other franchises, like *Silent Hill* and *Fatal Frame*, were starting to portray horror in a more mature fashion, and the *RE* franchise was in danger of being irrelevant, goofy zombie fare.

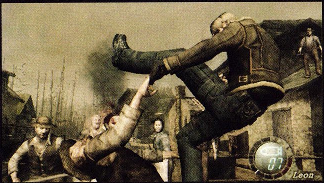
Enter *Resident Evil 4*, which transforms the *RE* franchise from slow survival-horror into fast action-horror (much like the transformation of George Romero zombies into modern-era *28 Days Later* zombies). Heck, *RE4* isn't even about the infamous Umbrella Corporation; instead it's about Leon (the cop from *RE2*) rescuing the president's daughter from some very, very creepy villagers in a remote village in Spain.

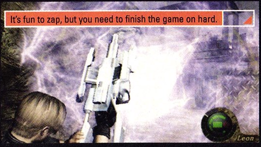
The most striking and immediate change that *RE4* brings is to the camera, which simultaneously improves the previous games' camera and control issues. Past *RE* games have been criticized for badly placed cameras and the odd "tank" controls—you know, where Up on the control pad always moved your character forward. With the camera now over Leon's shoulder, not only is the visual issue fixed (if you can't see something, it's easy to simply turn to look at your target) but the tank controls actually feel appropriate. The camera combines with the widescreen look (which, on the PS2 version, actually fills up a widescreen TV) to give *RE4* a very cinematic presentation, which is strongly helped by the pure action in the game.

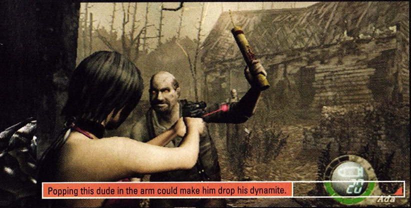
Old *RE* games pretty much trained you to run the hell away from anything until you could conserve enough ammo to shoot your pursuer. *RE4* encourages you to be bold and tactical. The fastest way to get more ammunition is simply to keep killing enemies and looting their bodies, but if you're sloppy at combat, then you'll find yourself running out of ammo. This forces you to learn to be, you know, actually *good* at the game. Combat is replete with tactical options, like using grenades versus guns, choosing to let enemies get in close range for your kicks and suplexes, deciding which upgrade to apply to which weapon, using your surroundings (such as funneling the enemy through narrow areas), trying the "gun-to-stun-and-knife-to-end-life" method, and (for a specific reason revealed early in the game) determining whether to even try for a head shot or not.

In addition to the tactical options in combat, *RE4* is filled with an abundance of tiny details that affect both the gameplay and the immersion factor. You can choose to shoot thrown items in midair (so when a villager is tossing a knife at you, do you try to shoot it out of the way or conserve a bullet by trying to dodge it?), cripple an enemy who has lit dynamite in his hand long enough for it to explode on him rather than you, shoot chickens and fish to get health items, and push dressers and armoires behind doors to reinforce them. Heck, even when you have to escort Ashley, she's smart enough to actually duck when you're trying to aim your gun at some bad dude behind her.

Building on this are some of the most spectacular boss battles in recent memory—they outdo the boss fights not only of previous *RE* games, but of most games in general (with the exception, of




It's fun to zap, but you need to finish the game on hard.


Popping this dude in the arm could make him drop his dynamite.

Fire-traps drive up the mortgage on this charming Spanish castle.
Ashley
06
Leon

If you already own the GameCube version of *RE4*, you might want to hold off on buying the PS2 iteration. The costumes and weapons and the new stuff don't get unlocked until a first playthrough, and the cut-scenes are prerendered (as opposed to being real time as they are on the GameCube)—you can tell because Leon still has on the default clothes in his cut-scenes even if you play the game with an alternate costume.

course, of *Shadow of the Colossus* and *God of War*). One has you being dragged by a massive creature, another has you climbing on its back; a memorable moment is a battle against an ex-commando (in which your knife is the best weapon to use against him!), and an optional battle has you using liquid nitrogen to weaken a nigh-invincible predator stalking you in a dark corridor.

Rounding out the regular action and the boss fights are some spectacular set pieces, like a sequence where you defend a house against a horde of villagers, another where you and a helicopter clear out a pathway, a third where you're in a mine cart and enemies are jumping from their carts onto yours, and one where you're navigating through a room full of fire-spewing dragon statues.

All of the combat, boss fights, and crazy action sequences are spread out evenly over a 20-hour game that goes from village to castle to military base, which means that the pacing is tense and consistent (this is also helped by the varied and creepy enemies, ranging from simple villagers to freaky-blind-guys-with-big-claws to giant spiders that crawl out of open neck wounds), and there are no stretches of dull gameplay. Not even cut-scenes are a moment to rest, as they frequently have action events where suddenly something like "Dodge: L1 + R1" or "Cut: Press Square Rapidly" appear onscreen, and you have to reply near-instantly or die. Heck, even the varied death animations (Leon getting decapitated with a chain saw, having his face melted by acid, or being impaled through the neck) are morbidly amusing to watch and make you realize that the development team didn't slouch in any department.

And that's just the main game. Finishing it the first time unlocks three minigames—two are story-related modes (Assignment Ada, which takes about an hour to do, and Separate Ways, which takes about six hours) and the last is a pure action mode with high replayability (Mercenaries, with unlockable characters like Wesker and Hunk from *RE2*). And that's not counting all the weapons and costumes you can then use in another playthrough of the main story.

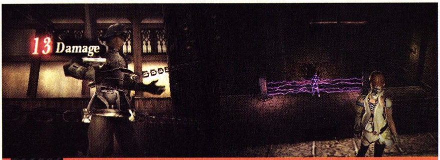
However, the action and gameplay are so superior that the minor imperfections actually stand out more. The story nearly dips into a realm of unbridled stupidity, the dialogue is pretty bad at times, not being able to strafe takes getting used to, and it just feels silly to open the seemingly ubiquitous crates for items. Also, the puzzles are pretty simplistic (that might be a plus in your book, though), and it'd be nice to have a faster way to switch weapons than to use the inventory screen.

Nevertheless, *RE4* is, quite simply, the ideal sequel: The developers have managed to not only bolster and dramatically improve the good qualities of an *RE* title, but also completely drain out the bad aspects of the *RE* franchise. It's a perfectly executed reinvention of a stagnating franchise. « *Thierry Nguyen*

VERDICT Proof that a great game is still great even when on a different platform than it premiered on.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●●]



TRAPT
BUILDING A BETTER MOUSETRAP

Using scantily clad princess Allura like a minnow on a hook, I lure my victim onto a springboard and press the X button at just the right time to send him flying. He lands directly below a giant swinging pendulum blade, just as I'd planned. I cut the blade loose and watch him fly again, this time directly into a wall of spears. They run him through in about 10 different places, but he's still alive, if limping (no silly realism here). Luckily, he stumbles under my chandelier trap. With sadistic delight, I pass over the trigger and watch the giant chandelier crush the last centimeter of his life bar away.

Like a gothic horror version of a Wile E. Coyote cartoon, *Trapt* is all about elaborate booby traps and the sadistic pleasure of watching someone fall into them. Through a series of story-wrapped levels, the game never really changes. You're always running away from the bad guys, hoping to guide them into the traps you've set. It's the thinking man's version of a *Grand Theft Auto* killing spree.

But the pleasure of *Trapt* isn't in staying alive to watch the next cut-scene—it's in creating your own ridiculously complex killing machine. If you're not into puzzling out how the traps work in every room, you won't enjoy yourself. *Trapt* asks for more trial-and-error work than modern gamers are used to. ADD gamers used to being spoon-fed will die of boredom long before victims reach the iron maiden. « *Robert Ashley*

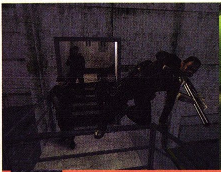
VERDICT A feast for creative quirk-seekers; a famine for lazy mainstreamers.

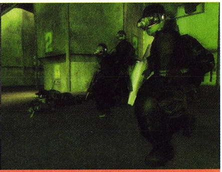
Pub. Tecmo **Dev.** Tecmo **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●○○]

DECEPTIVE SEQUEL

Trapt may seem to have come out of nowhere, but gamers have been gruesomely executing foes in elaborate traps since Tecmo's original PlayStation game, *Deception*. *Trapt* is the third game in the series.





CONFLICT: GLOBAL TERROR
COOKIE-CUTTER SQUAD-BASED SHOOTING

With the increasing number of squad-based games available, from Sony's newer *SOCOM* series to the granddaddy of them all, *Rainbow Six*, it's no longer enough to just use your reticle to give commands to a few teammates. There has to be a twist.

Conflict: Global Terror's problem is that it doesn't really have such a twist; it just plows on in a fairly competent squad-based way with no unique element. What's left is your bog-standard squad-based routine, with a slightly clunky interface. You can order your men to take certain positions, provide covering fire, heal one another, and do most of the above immediately or at your signal. Having each of your troops specialize in something does liven things up, especially since you can take control of any squad member at any time.

While nifty, that point is also *Conflict*'s downfall as a squad-based game, since you can always take the role of the person best suited to complete whatever needs doing at a given moment. If you're up against an enemy vehicle, why give the order to have the heavy-weapons guy use a rocket when you could use the rocket yourself? From there, it's a small leap to this idea: If you're going to play a squad-based shooter, why play this one when you could pop in one that's more interesting? « *Nich Maragos*

PROS Lots of ways to approach missions
CONS Awkward interface; me-too-ism
VERDICT OK, but better games are out there

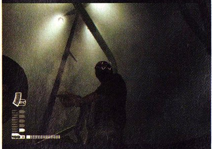
Pub. 2K Games **Dev.** Pivotal **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●○○]

WITHOUT WARNING
WE'VE GOT A WARNING FOR YOU

The whole squad-based-shooter thing has gotten so overdone in the past few years that something along the lines of *Without Warning*—a single-player shooter where commanding a crew of AI-driven teammates is not on the program—actually sounds refreshing.

Without Warning's got a pretty unique setup, too, as you take control of a number of separate heroes caught in different sections of the same power station. The station has been attacked by terrorists (natch), and it's up to you to run the different characters through the game in tandem, helping each other out by defusing bombs here, pulling switches there, and inflicting a bad case of death on as many stereotypical terrorists as you can find.



And it's all quite engaging for the first hour or so. Constantly switching back and forth between characters with slightly different abilities keeps the game somewhat fresh...until you realize that each level plays almost exactly the same: Shoot at endless waves of terrorists while partaking in a few very repetitive minigames, such as defusing bombs, picking locks, and so on.

To top it off, the over-the-shoulder third-person camera actually makes it very difficult to aim during a heated firefight. It's quite easy to unload a full clip into, say, a concrete column, even though your targeting reticle says that you're locked on to the terrorist scum on the other side of the room. It's like the reticle reacts to where your camera is pointed, while the gun is actually aiming from somewhere off to the left or right of the screen.

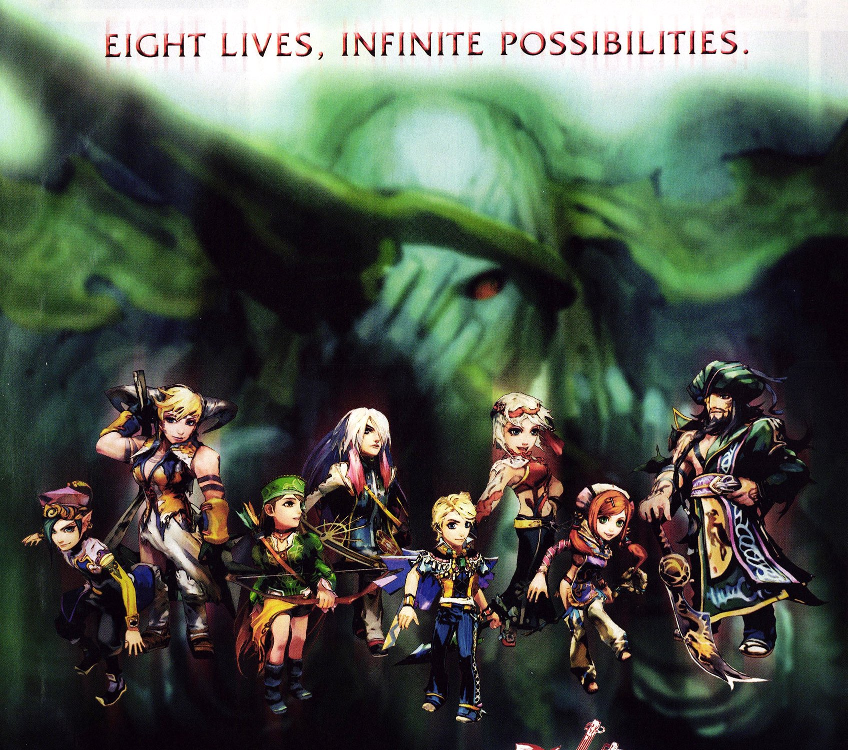
The technical issues and superlinear gameplay combine to make this just another average shooter. It's too bad, too, because *Without Warning* had great potential. « *Greg Sewart*

Without Warning is the first game from Circle Studios, a studio that includes members from the original *Tomb Raider* team.

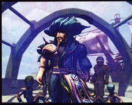
VERDICT With a better targeting system and more free-form gameplay, this could have been a winner.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Circle Studios **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●◐○○]


EIGHT LIVES, INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.

Encounter unique stories by playing eight different characters



Adventure without limits with the free-roaming scenario system

I'm an imperial guard, so I can't be with her all the time. Be a pal, huh? For old times' sake?
I accept.
No, thanks.

The choices you make influence events within future stories

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EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes

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PlayStation 2

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TOP SCORE 10000
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CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION
HOW MANY VERSIONS OF STREET FIGHTER DO YOU NEED?

It's really frightening that after all these years we still can't get a perfect port of the original *Street Fighter II*. The game is 15 years old! There should be no loading screens—and there's no reason for any of the games in this collection to be any worse than their arcade counterparts.

Granted, once you actually start playing the three versions of *Street Fighter II* (the original, *Championship Edition*, and *Turbo*), you notice almost everything about them is arcade perfect, but the loading times are just incredibly lame and totally inexcusable.

As for the rest of the games in the collection, *Capcom* has a really nice mix of arcade classics, even if some notable games (like *Strider*) are missing. Unfortunately, as with most collections of this nature, a lot of these games have been propped up by nostalgia, and while some of them still hold up (namely, the *Ghosts 'n Goblins* games and *Final Fight*), they'll provide only minor enjoyment as your fond memories come crashing down.

Still, it's one of the better collections of old games, and it does an excellent job of demonstrating why Capcom was a dominant force in the arcades. It just could've gone a little further to include additional games from the era. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Good collection of arcade classics, cheap price
CONS Loading screens in *Street Fighter II*, some key games missing

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Digital Eclipse **ESRB** T **MSRP** $19.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

36
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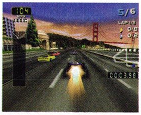
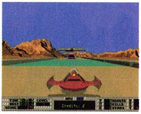




MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES 3
MISSING THE BOAT

Midway's history is steeped in arcade racing. In fact, one of the very first 3D racing games, *Hard Drivin'*, was developed and released in arcades by Midway—and its sequel, *Race Drivin'*, is included in this collection. You probably won't get much entertainment out of it, though—the graphics are incredibly dated and the action is, well, not so fast and furious. (*Stun Runner* is a slightly better example of what flat-shaded polygons could do.)

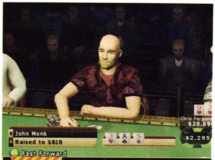
While some of the other games in the collection look equally ancient, their gameplay is still surprisingly good. *Super Off Road* and *Super Off Road Track Pak* are plenty of fun and serve as a perfect example of why you don't need fancy graphics or millions of polygons to make a fun racing game. However, the one game that is still visually relevant, *Hydro Thunder*, plays as great as it did in the arcade and on the Dreamcast (the PS2 version is a port of the Dreamcast game). It *is* worth noting, however, that while the PS2 version looks good, it isn't quite as clean as its Dreamcast counterpart.

The two *Rush* games, *San Francisco Rush 2049* and *San Francisco Rush The Rock: Alcatraz Edition* hold up fairly well thanks to some solid tracks filled with plenty of shortcuts to help keep you focused on the race. Unfortunately, *Rush 2049* suffers from some pretty nasty slowdown whenever there's any more than a single car on the screen, making it difficult to get through even one lap. Other than those problems, this is a pretty good collection with a nice mixture of old to help complement the new. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS *Hydro Thunder*, older games are still fun to play, cheap
CONS Slowdown in *Rush 2049*, other games could've been cleaned up more

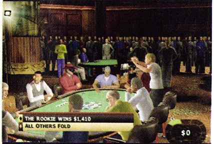
Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway **ESRB** E **MSRP** $19.99

RATING [●●●◐○]



WORLD SERIES OF POKER
PLEASE PLAY THIS GAME

I want you to play this game. No, I'm serious; I really, really want you to play this game. I want you to experience the thrill of watching Scotty Nguyen check pocket aces to the river. I want you to see five-way showdowns in every other hand. I want you to watch two players go all-in on king-high hands. I want you to play this game because it will give you exactly the wrong idea about how poker is really played, and therefore, if we ever meet at a real, live poker table, I can be virtually guaranteed to leave with your money.



I don't have a problem with *World Series of Poker*'s utterly bare-bones presentation. I don't mind that it offers absolutely no training or that there's precious little to the game beyond the WSOP tournament slog. I don't mind the laughable graphics or the generally insulting representations of real-life poker players. I don't even really care that the much-appreciated fast-forward function doesn't work in Omaha games for some reason.

No, what really gets me is that the game skimps in all these superficial areas but *still* doesn't manage to get the fundamentals right. Look, I know that poker is a complex game. I'm sure that it takes some very advanced AI routines and, I dunno, logarithms to make computer players at all believable. But *WSOP* is so dramatically deficient in just about every way that it's painfully obvious that this is nothing more than a cynical attempt to cash in on the poker craze. I haven't seen the other poker games due this year, but I can virtually guarantee they'll be better. « *Joe Rybicki*

PROFESSIONAL EMBARRASSMENT

The poker pros who lent their names and likenesses to this travesty are Darrell Dicken, Chris Ferguson, Beth Fischman, Chip Jett, Carrie Lew, Jim Meehan, Edward Moncada, Men Nguyen, Scotty Nguyen, Max Pescatori, John Phan, and Dennis Waterman.

VERDICT Great for players who have absolutely no desire to experience what real poker is like.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Left Field **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $29.99

RATING [●○○○○]

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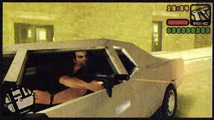

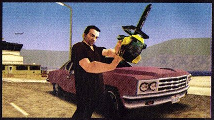

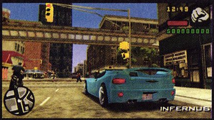

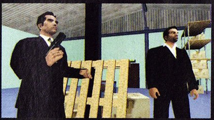

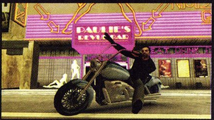

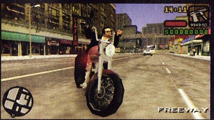

GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

A NOSTALGIC RETURN TO GAMING'S MOST FAMOUS CITY

Passing judgment on *Liberty City Stories* requires you to consider the game in two very different ways. The first, as a remarkable example of what can be done on the PSP when a developer really puts its mind to it, reveals a magnificent game that will no doubt long be a benchmark on the system. It is a fully blown, no-holds-barred *Grand Theft Auto* experience with all the trimmings nipped, tucked, and tweaked for a handheld. The second is to consider it as the sixth game in one of the biggest franchises of all time, and the fourth of this particular style. With that legacy in mind, and the fact that more gamers have an opinion on this thing than have an opinion on any other game aside from perhaps *Mario* or *Final Fantasy*, it's hard to turn a blind eye to its flaws.

Like all of the *GTA*s before it, *LCS* has a number of problems; some of them are caused by the PSP itself, and therefore not strictly appropriate for factoring into the score, but some of them are the same damn problems that gamers have been waiting for Rockstar to fix for years. Since the game leans so heavily on its running-around-shooting-stuff mechanic, you'd think that mechanic would be refined to the point of perfection by now. Sure, *LCS* is somewhat hindered by the PSP's single analog stick, but the guts driving the combat system are still basically the same as we got in *GTA3* and *Vice City* before they were refined (a little) for *San Andreas*. It's clear that some attention has been paid to the aiming system, but it's in an area that seems irrelevant given the way the game has been designed. You can now fine-tune your aiming by tapping down on the D-pad and then holding down the L button. This allows you to move the reticle with much more precision, but it's the type of feature that you tend to forget is there because it's not essential. Many of the more challenging combat missions require you to wander into a crowded area and pick off specific targets while everyone around you opens fire. Tapping the R button locks on to a target, and if you've played any other game in the series, you know how reliable that can be. You often have to be more quick-witted than the mission design really requires because either you struggle to point your gun at the right thing or you waste ammo wiping out everything. An unusual side effect is that you try to work out ways to compensate

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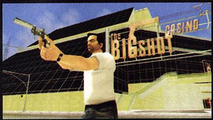
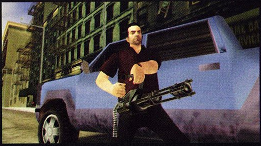
CHINATOWN

Story and character development are no less important in *Liberty City Stories* than they are in any other *GTA*.





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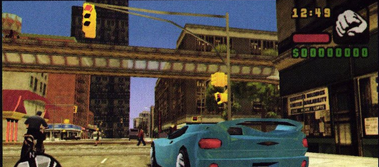
The on-foot segments may drive you insane, but with the game's element of freedom you can usually find multiple ways to accomplish your goals.



for this problem. I'm sure the system isn't intentionally weak to force you to explore the delights of the "digital sandbox" design ethos, but it certainly pushes you that way. Running people over, blowing stuff up, and blocking areas by piling up cars is often more effective than what the objective specifically calls for. If you know the series, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

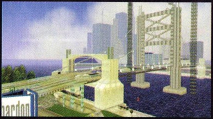
Lesser games would be utterly ruined by something like this, but as with the past three games in the series, there's plenty to compensate for these weaknesses. As a value proposition, nothing on PSP comes close. It's a gigantic game; the core gameplay will probably take you 40 or 50 hours to get through, and it has 33 additional "games" that have the potential to occupy you for another five or even 10 hours, if you really want to push it. Alongside the expected taxi driving, firefighting, and vigilante missions we're familiar with, *LCS* has various races, shoot-outs, and package-collection and delivery-based games that draw influences from all of the past *Grand Theft Autos*. Then, *on top of that*, there's the whole multiplayer thing, too, which is significantly more substantial than you would expect. The seven modes all borrow ideas from the tried-and-trusted school of multiplayer game design, but their distinctiveness comes from the way they use the entire environment and force players to learn the maps. If, like me, you don't often spend time with five PSP-owning friends with the same taste in games as you, there are only a few modes that really work with smaller numbers. The deathmatch- and marked-for-death-style games don't really work unless you max out with six players, but you'll still find a few gems for two players. One variation on capture the flag, which has you stealing limos, works just great with a single opponent, and then there's my personal favorite of the lot, "wedding list," which is a free-for-all scramble to steal specific cars and return them to a designated shipping crate. It plays a little like some of the single-player stuff, but the added dimension of "real" competition makes it genuinely exciting.

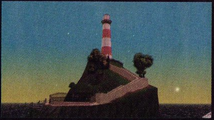
As you can probably tell, *LCS* has plenty to distract you from the main story, but as we've come to expect from Rockstar, that core experience is extremely well written (although it's subtly but spectacularly and hilariously puerile, especially when it comes to

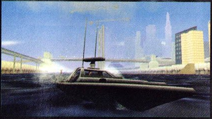
Though you don't need to know the whole *GTA* story to enjoy *LCS*, fans will note many references to the other games.

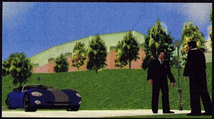
BUY SPARE BATTERIES!

Compared to so many other PSP games', the load times in *Liberty City Stories* are certainly impressive. The city loads quickly and never has to stop to load, and you see a break in the action only when things stop for a cut-scene. Even then, transitions are reasonably fast. Plenty of music is pulled in from the disc, and the whole game is packed with speech. No punches seem to have been pulled...but that comes at a considerable cost. Playing nonstop, at full brightness, with the sound turned up, but without the Wi-Fi turned on, the PSP's battery lasted two hours and 31 minutes before it gave up. With the Wi-Fi turned on, there wasn't enough juice to last for more than two hours. If you have a long journey ahead of you, pack some power alternatives! Chargers, power bricks, spare batteries...grab whatever you can find.









character names) and well paced. Although it's slow to start, once you pass the fifth or sixth hour, things really start to fall into place, and it reveals itself to be a complex story that's somewhat more political than we've come to expect. The machinations of the different criminal factions and their impositions on the way the city is run make for an engaging tale that really begins to get interesting around hour 10 as you start to insert yourself into the mayoral election and the rivalries it inspires. Missions are usually much shorter than those in the PS2 games and rarely push you into the lengthy sequences of events we saw in *San Andreas*. Usually, there's just a single objective, such as "go here and kill this guy," and it rarely gets any more involved than a sequence of two, like "follow this guy, then blow this thing up." The result is a much more PSP-friendly game that works very well for killing 10 or 15 minutes at a time.

Early on, protagonist Toni Cipriani is perhaps not as endearing at CJ is in *San Andreas*, but as the story unfolds, you learn to appreciate his more clichéd Mafioso charms. Initially, his abusive relationships with other characters are straight out of an episode of *The Sopranos*, but as you explore his loyalties and watch his relationship with his mother unfold in a bizarre series of episodes in the first act of the game, you learn to sympathize with him. By the time you move into the third act, you realize that he is, in fact, just like CJ, in that you feel quite a bond with the uncouth yob.

Despite some fundamental problems that will have you seething with anger at fairly regular intervals, it's still an admirable achievement. Whereas so many other publishers have been pushing watered-down, feeble excuses for PSP versions of their megafranchises, this should be applauded for being a full-on sequel, and it's certainly comparable to *GTA3*. « *John Davison*

VERDICT It's a full-on *Grand Theft Auto* experience, only portable.

Pub. Rockstar **Dev.** Rockstar Leeds **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

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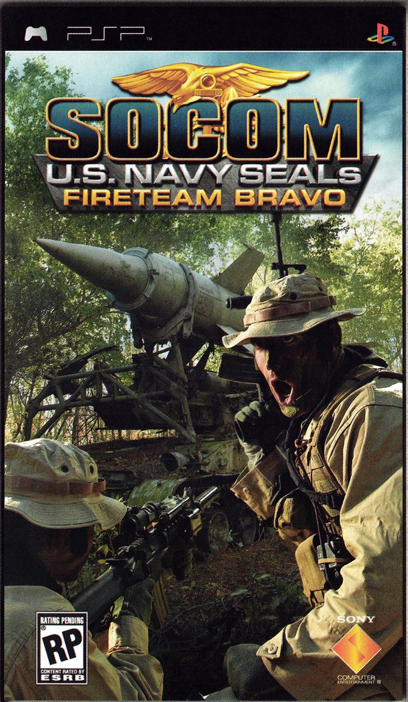
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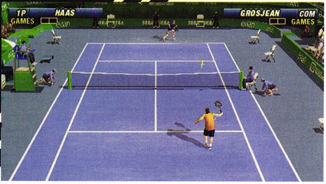
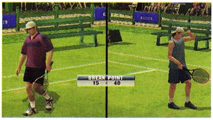
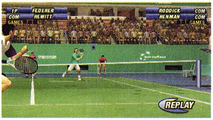
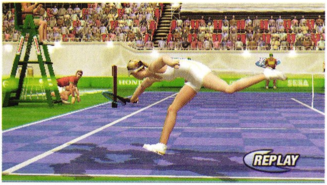
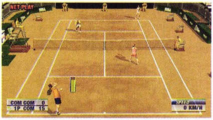
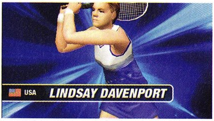


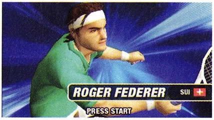




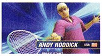








MARIA SHARAPOVA



VIRTUA TENNIS: WORLD TOUR

NOTHING WORTH DOING IS EASY

In the interest of full disclosure, I should inform you that I had high expectations for this game. I really enjoyed *Virtua Tennis* on the Dreamcast; it is wonderfully simple to get into, but developing the finesse necessary to excel takes real time and effort.

World Tour, sadly, lacks some of the instant draw of its predecessor. To be fair, this is due in part because the PSP's sliding nub is less sensitive than a true analog stick. That lack of sensitivity makes it harder to pull off the trickier shots with any precision. This is compounded by the fact that in world tour mode—the meat of the game—your player starts out woefully underskilled. So even though you might technically be doing what you're supposed to be doing, the ball may still behave erratically.

That's the bad news. The good news is that this makes world tour mode a serious time sink, requiring you to work your way through a series of surprisingly difficult minigames to build up your skills. I won't lie to you: This is not always fun. There are times when the world tour feels like serious work—especially early on, when it seems like you just can't do anything right. But the upside is that you feel a great sense of accomplishment as your characters start getting good enough to take on the pros.

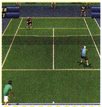
Aside from world tour, the game boasts your typical exhibition and tournament modes, plus a selection of minigames different from those found in the world tour. These are diverting enough, but with the game sending you back to the Main menu after each attempt, I have to say they're just not worth the time.

Luckily, the rest of the game most definitely is. « *Joe Rybicki*

ACES Deep world tour mode, deceptively simple gameplay, fun multiplayer
FAULTS It's hard to hit with finesse, not much outside of world tour

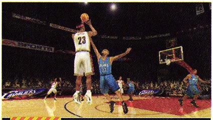
Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●○]



COURT IS IN SESSION!

Virtua Tennis: World Tour's four-way multiplayer is one of the game's greatest features. The simplistic gameplay is ideal for grudge matches, and two-player cooperative doubles is a total blast. You do, however, need a friend with a PSP and a copy of the game. No *Burnout Legends*–style freebies here, folks.

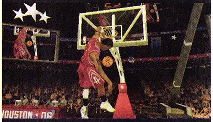


NBA LIVE 06

IT HAS ALL THE FUNDAMENTALS

Since this is the first iteration of the *NBA Live* series on the PSP, you would probably suspect that it's simply a chopped-down version of its PS2 counterpart—much like almost every other sports game on the PSP—and not surprisingly, it pretty much is. Still, all of the new features from the console game are intact here, including a very minimal online mode (which just doesn't have a lot of options to choose from) and the freestyle superstars feature.

Freestyle superstars is actually kind of a cool idea that, if expanded upon in future versions of the game, could really help differentiate the star players from the bench riders because it gives star players an advantage over everyone else. Basically, it lets certain players execute special moves depending on their specialties. So, for example, Shaq has access to special dunks because that's pretty much what Shaq does in real NBA games—he dunks a lot. Conversely, a point guard like Steve Nash has some special passes. But a lot of the time, these special moves seem to be more cosmetic flash than anything that dramatically affects gameplay.



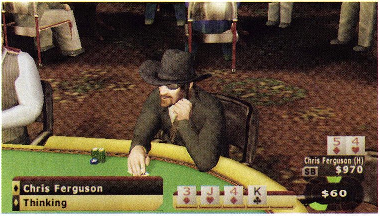
Of course, all the other features from *NBA Live 2005* are in here as well, such as the NBA All-Star Weekend that includes the fun-for-five-minutes three-point shoot-out, the rookie challenge, and the dunk contest. However, the dunk contest's convoluted control scheme is much harder to adapt to on the PSP than it is on the PS2. And that's not the only discrepancy between the PS2 and PSP versions of the game. Since the PSP lacks a second analog stick, it's just not as fun to perform special ball-handling moves on it—the way the advanced moves are set up on the PSP almost disrupts the flow of a fast break or a drive into the paint.

Other than that, *NBA Live 06* is pretty much what you've come to expect from PSP sports titles: all the fundamentals of the PS2 version and, well, not a whole lot more. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Flows like the PS2 game, base controls are great, good selection of extras
CONS Superstars feature could use work

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Sports **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●○○]



WORLD SERIES OF POKER

POINTS FOR PORTABILITY

The PSP version of *World Series of Poker* is almost exactly the same as the PS2 version reviewed on page 132. I could discern two differences. First, a bare-bones video poker minigame has been shoehorned in there. And second, the representations of the pros have made the leap from "insulting" to "disturbing" (along with the rest of the portrayals of humanity in the game). Since it has slightly more gameplay and is portable, I'm giving it half a point more.

Now that that's out of the way, I'd like to use the rest of this space to explain to those of you who don't play poker why I'm so down on these games. Imagine, if you will, firing up an MLB-licensed baseball game only to discover that when your third baseman fields a ground ball, half the time he throws it into right field.

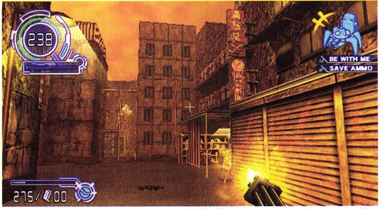
Imagine an NFL game in which your receivers run in the wrong direction. A basketball game in which your players refuse to stay in bounds. A soccer game in which players pick up the ball and throw it with and no one notices. If you were a fan of any of these sports, you'd be disgusted, and rightly so. But for some reason, equivalent behavior—e.g., checking down pocket aces, routinely calling pot-sized bets with rags—is tolerated in poker games. Maybe it really is that hard to develop a solid poker AI. But my guess is that it's just harder than rushing a product out to exploit a white-hot fad.

« Joe Rybicki

VERDICT Another cynical exploitation of a fad, but hey, at least it's portable!

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Left Field **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●◐○○○]



GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX

PSP, FPS, OMG!

In this review of *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, there will be no frothing anime fanboyisms. Yes, this first-person shooter is true to the cartoon, but if there's one thing to take away from the game, it's these words: "target lock."

Any PS2 game that relies on a right analog stick for aiming has no business being on the PSP without a target lock. *Stand Alone Complex* has this feature and successfully washes out the funky taste of Konami's *Coded Arms* in the process. As in *Arms*, aiming is twitchy, relying upon the face buttons. However, once an enemy is in your field of vision, an indicator pops up. Push Down on the D-pad, and the indicator locks onto the target. The camera then follows the enemy until he's out of view for a couple seconds or dead. While not perfect, it works. Enough camera talk, though—there's an actual game here.

After picking one of the four main characters from the show (each one has slight strengths—Saito, for example, is a master sniper), you select and equip your Tamagotchi—sorry—Tachikoma. These spiderlike walking, talking tanks with customizable loadouts also happen to have the AI personalities of giggling schoolgirls. Don't ask. It's an anime thing. During missions, you can either take control of the robots or direct them like you would a squadmate in other games. Your Tachikomas learn a little as you progress; too bad the enemy doesn't. Unload buckshot into an enemy, and baddie No. 2 doesn't notice his poker buddy just died.

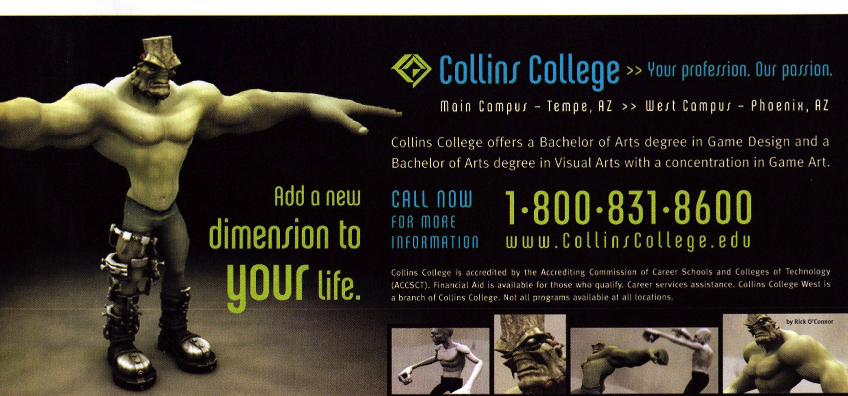
At least the deathmatch and co-op modes will take your mind off things.

« Darren Gladstone

VERDICT Holy crap! Someone actually made an FPS game on the PSP work.

Pub. Bandai **Dev.** Bandai **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●◐○]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by Rick O'Connor

STAR WARS
EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH

(Ewan McGregor, Hayden Christensen)

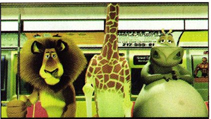
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO! by John Scalzi

Now that the whole *Star Wars* saga has been packed away into its final film cans and sent rocketing off into the dual sunset of Tatooine, let's go ahead and admit the things we never wanted to admit. First: The "prequel" *Star Wars* trilogy well and truly sucks, from first frame to last, and no amount of excuse-making for it will ever change that fact. Second: George Lucas is the worst major director working today and would be one of the worst minor ones, too. Off the top of my head, only two directors strike me as less artful: the gaspingly bad Paul W.S. Anderson and the unholy rancidity that is Uwe Boll. When you're working on the same tier as the auteur of *Alone in the Dark*, you have problems.

Sith has all the issues that plagued *The Phantom Menace* and *Attack of the Clones*: an awful, leaden script, painfully bland performances from a cast that's capable of award-level acting, and a flat emotional effect that takes all of the potential pathos of the film—which is considerable—and squeezes it dead flat. Add to this the film's own particular sin: a need to conjoin the prequel trilogy to the original trilogy's specifications, no matter how awkward or painful. The last 20 minutes of the film serve solely to fulfil that need; you can see Lucas going down the list, caulking this film onto the first film he did in the series nearly 30 years ago. What makes this all *especially* painful is the realization this is actually the *best* film of the prequel trilogy. This is the best that George Lucas is capable of—or at the very least the best he's willing to do for this series.

Star Wars fans have been making excuses for Lucas for so long that it comes as second nature, but if the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy has showed us anything, it's that fantastical special-effects spectacles don't have to skimp on character, acting, script, or raw emotional power. All *Sith* and the rest of the prequel series have going for them is that they are pretty, thanks to ILM. It's not nearly enough.

RATING [○○●●●]



MADAGASCAR

(Ben Stiller, Chris Rock)

People, we've struck formula! This cute but uninspiring computer-animated film could have been plotted by the same computers that animated it: Take a mildly amusing situation (four zoo animals wind up in Madagascar and can't handle the wildness), add some mildly clever cultural zingers to keep the parents amused, and get some famous people to do the voices. The kids will find it cute; the adults will wonder why it seems so familiar.

RATING [○○○●●]

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

(Johnny Depp, Freddie Highmore)

The problem with director Tim Burton is you never know which Tim Burton you're going to get: the sharp, Gothy, and somewhat amusingly cruel Burton of *Batman* or the tone-deaf, lazy Burton of *Mars Attacks!*. Luckily, it's the smart Burton (mostly) this time around, giving this edition of the story almost all the right grace notes, from the perfectly repulsive collection of kids who find four of the golden tickets, to the guileless sweetness of Charlie (Highmore), who finds the fifth, to the off-kilter insanity of the actual chocolate factory. Johnny Depp's Wonka is a love or hate thing, but it works for me. The only thing that doesn't work is the Burton-created backstory for Wonka. But if that's the worst that happens, yay again. This could have been so much worse.

RATING [○○○○●]

MARCH OF THE PENGUINS

(Morgan Freeman, flightless birds)

In one of the more profoundly stupid political maneuvers recently, conservatives have seized upon this adorable penguin-filled documentary as an example of family values in nature. Which makes me want to pull out what little of my hair remains and say: "Hey, guys, you know that the movie was shot, edited, and narrated by humans, right?" The penguins themselves could not possibly give a crap about your metacontext.

RATING [○○○○●]

MURDERBALL

(Mark Zupan, Keith Cavill)

Guys in wheelchairs playing rugby, and doing a far better job of it than your candied bottom could. We've all heard the message that the physically disabled are not nearly as disabled as we might think, but this is the first film that will make you think, *Holy crap, this guy's a quadriplegic and he could totally kick my ass.* Watching these guys go at it playing rugby makes you realize that "disabled" is a far more relative term than you ever imagined.

RATING [○○○○●]

DVD RELEASES

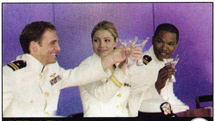
November 1
Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith
War of the Worlds

November 8
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

November 15
Madagascar
Stealth

November 22
The Polar Express

November 29
March of the Penguins
Mr. and Mrs. Smith



STEALTH

(Jamie Foxx, Jessica Biel)

If the summer of 2005 is remembered for anything moviewise, it will be that it was the year movie audiences told Hollywood that there was a bottom limit to the amount of stupidity they'd accept in an action movie. *Stealth*, with its largely moronic story about an artificially intelligent fighter plane gone nuts, is far below that level. Note to movie audiences who dinged this flick and *The Island*: God bless you, each and every one of you.

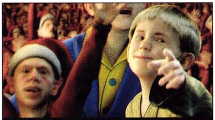
RATING [○◐●●●]

MR. AND MRS. SMITH

(Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie)

Man, this movie has something for everyone, and if you're bisexual, it's like a day at the fair. Pitt and Jolie play assassins who don't know the other is an assassin, until they do and then try to kill the hell out of each other. As if any of that matters, since the reason most people are watching this is to ogle the stars. I imagine TV repairmen are going to get a boost in their work from all the drool seeping into the electronics as people go up and lick their TV screens.

RATING [○○○◐●]



THE POLAR EXPRESS

(Tom Hanks, Peter Scolari)

This computer-animated Christmas tale creeps the hell out of me because all the characters look like they've been Botoxed—the animation process for face capture here is not quite ready for prime time. If you redubbed this and gave everyone zombie voices ("Santa... *braaaaaaaains*"), it would be both a lot more amusing and far more appropriate. But I don't think that's going to happen. A shame, that.

RATING [○○○●●]

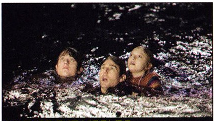
UMD RELEASES

November 1
28 Days Later

November 15
8 Mile
Clerks
The Incredibles

November 22
Children of the Corn
Dawn of the Dead
Hellraiser

November 29
Mr. and Mrs. Smith



WAR OF THE WORLDS

(Tom Cruise, Tim Robbins)

Sometimes it takes an alien invasion for a dad to realize just how important family is. That's pretty much the message of Steven Spielberg's take on *War of the Worlds*; I can handle that goofy message as long as Spielberg also jacks up the tension and the special effects the way only he can. And he does! He also does a creditable job updating the hoary H.G. Wells story, and movie geeks will note several shout-outs to the 1953 version. What more do you want?

RATING [○○○◐●]

NOKIA
SONY
POWER
HOLD

INSIDE: GRAND THEFT AUTO FOR PSP IS GOOD TO GO!

Pocket games

THE HANDHELD GAMING MAGAZINE

The Ultimate PSP Movie Database
Page 32

Mobile-phone games are taking over... five minutes at a time
Page 20

Woof! Advanced Nintendogs tricks mastered!
Page 30

+ Final Fantasy is coming to PSP
Page 60

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REPLAY

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SOUL FOOD

THE MAKING OF SOUL CALIBUR III

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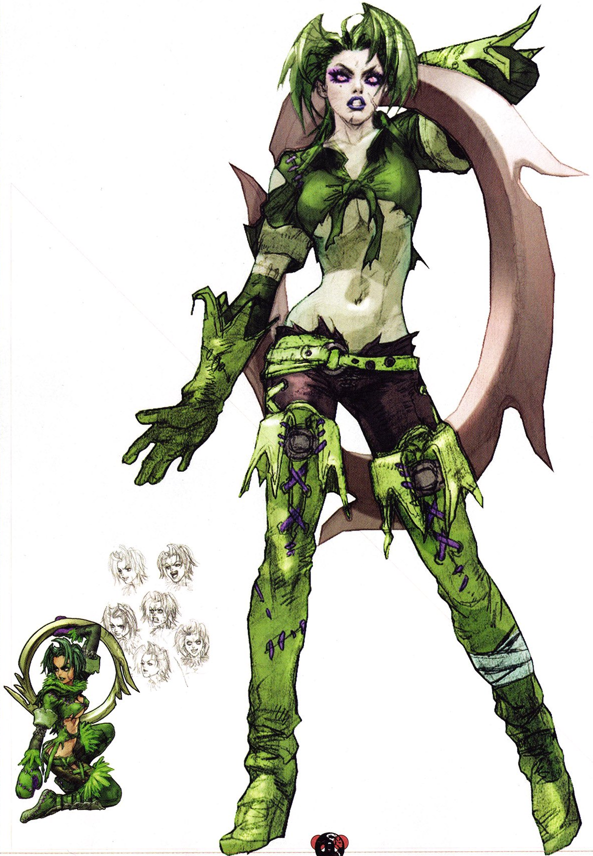
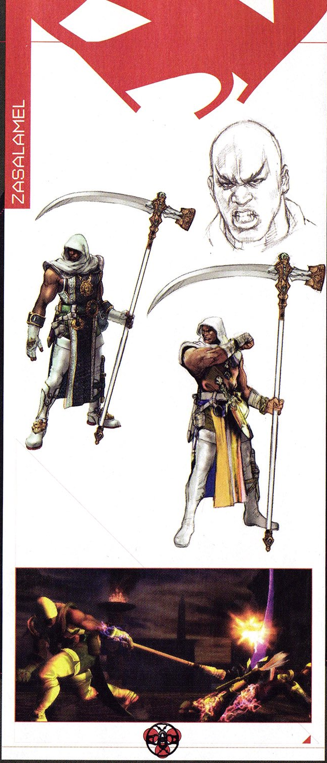


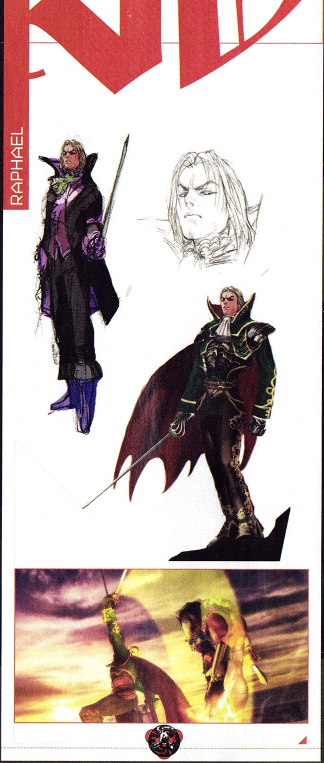
BEHIND THE GAME

SOUL CALIBUR III

DIGITAL ACTORS ON A STAGE OF HISTORY

As with most fighting game sequels, *Soul Calibur III* features returning characters (in this case, a roster of tried and true swordsmen, swordswomen, and swordslizards), in addition to some new ones, which *Soul Calibur III* features three of, each with their own unique look, weapons, and move sets. But even a few of the original *Soul Calibur* and *Soul Calibur II* characters received some noticeable changes. "The two classic characters who were changed the most were probably Raphael and Talim," says Hideo Yoshie, chief character designer on *Soul Calibur*





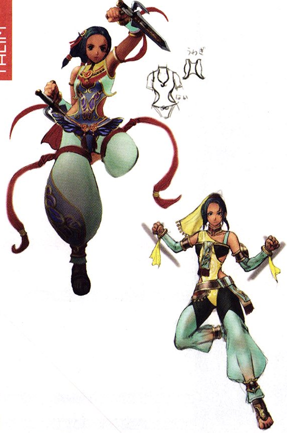
III. "For Raphael, we wanted to emphasize his [evil demeanor] and his royal image. By doing this, we feel [we were able to make] his character more distinctive."

But regardless of how they evolve, all of the character designs in a *Soul Calibur* game start with a single object—the weapon. "The most important factor we consider here is that the weapon is unique. The move variations, as well as the type of character, can be imagined from that weapon," says Kent Kojima, motion capture chief. "Once the weapon is selected, we choose the sex [of the character], then the height, weight, and age, and down to the details of where the character is from. Then the character starts to take shape. These pieces of information are what the character designer creates a design off of. The character modeler then works with the design to develop a model, and the motion designer incorporates the motion into that model...and our character comes to life onscreen."

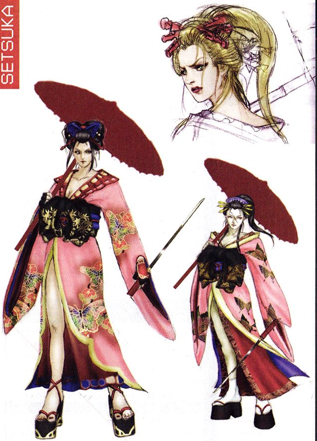
And as with all of the *Soul Calibur* games, *Soul Calibur III* features the same excellent motion capture animation the series is known for. But surprisingly, one of the most animated characters doesn't use much motion capture at all. "Voldo actually has very little motion capture," says Kojima. "Many of his movements are based on the imagination of the motion designer. That distinctive curvy, swerving movement—I thought it was only possible within one's imagination. But one day, I worked with a motion capture actor who had a very flexible body. I asked him if he could do Voldo's movements, and he actually demonstrated [them] in front of me. I was astonished that a human being could actually move like that. It left quite an impression on me. You probably can't tell which part is motion capture and what was just animated by hand by our animator."

The new characters are as interesting as Voldo, if not more so. The first, Setsuka, has some traits that you probably wouldn't notice at first glance. The inspiration for Setsuka, Yoshie tells us, was a flower. "She has a unique look since she is a Caucasian

TALIM



SETSUKA



PROFILE:

Aya Takemura

WHO IS SHE?

Concept artist on the *Soul Calibur* team

OTHER GAMES SHE HAS WORKED ON:

- *Tekken 3*
- *Tekken Tag Tournament*
- *Tekken 4*
- *Soul Calibur II*
- *R: Racing Evolution*
- *Ace Combat 5*
- *Namco X Capcom*
- *Urban Reign*
- *Soul Calibur III*

FAVORITE CHARACTER SHE'S WORKED ON:

Jin Kazama (*Tekken*)

MOST DIFFICULT CHARACTERS TO DRAW:

Those from other companies (for *Namco X Capcom*)

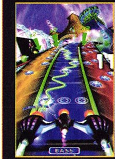
woman in a kimono," he says. "A woman wearing a glamorous kimono casually matched with a large oilpaper umbrella—we wanted to emphasize the interesting look of her silhouette." At the same time, she has a very traditional look that presents a stark contrast to the looks of the other new characters, Zasalamel and Tira. The former, Zasalamel, was based around the idea of a cleric, but with the notion of contrast mixed in as well. "We wanted to get a strong contrast between his dark, built body and the white, holy look of his robe," Yoshie says. "Of course, he has the image of Death with a scythe—that's a motif as well." With Tira, her look is a little more representative of her mood since Yoshie wanted to capture her emotional instability and madness, and it shows in her thrashed clothing and dark makeup.

Namco's done a great job of integrating all three new characters into the existing roster, making them well-balanced and fun to use—something many other fighting-game developers have yet to learn. «

REVIEW ARCHIVE

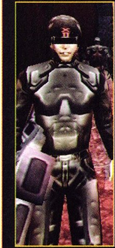
Game names in black bars indicate a Greatest Hits title. Names in red indicate a score of 5 out of 5. The ⚡ symbol indicates the game supports online play.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
PSP			
Ape Escape: On the Loose	Sony CEA	●●●	93
Archer Maclean's Mercury	Ignition	●●●◖	94
ATV Offroad Fury: Blazin' Trails	Sony CEA	●●●	94
Burnout Legends	EA Games	●●●●◖	98
Coded Arms	Konami	●●	95
The Con	Sony CEA	●●◖	98
Darkstalkers Chronicle: TCT	Capcom	●●●	93
Dead to Rights: Reckoning	Namco	●●◖	96
Death, Jr.	Konami	●●◖	96
Dynasty Warriors	Koei	●●●	92
FIFA 06	EA Sports	●●●●◖	98
FIFA Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●	94
Frantix	Platform Pub.	●●●	97
Gretzky NHL	Sony CEA	●●●◖	93
GripShift	Platform Pub.	●●●◖	97
Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee	Sony CEA	●●●●	95
Lumines	Ubisoft	●●●●	92
Madden NFL 06	EA Sports	●●●◖	98
Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	EA Games	●●◖	98
MediEvil Resurrection	Sony CEA	●●●●	97
Metal Gear Acid	Konami	●●●●	92
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	●●●●	96
MLB	Sony CEA	●●●◖	94
MVP Baseball	EA Sports	●●●	95
Namco Museum Battle Collection	Namco	●●●◖	97
NBA	Sony CEA	●●◖	93
NBA Street Showdown	EA Sports Big	●●●	94
Need for Speed Underground Rivals	EA Games	●●●◖	92
NFL Street 2: Unleashed	EA Sports Big	●●●	93
Rengoku: The Tower of Purgatory	Konami	●	93
Ridge Racer	Namco	●●●●◖	92
Smart Bomb	Eidos	●◖	93
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	93
Tiger Woods PGA Tour	EA Sports	●●●●	93
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06	EA Sports	●●●●	98
Tony Hawk's Underground 2: Remix	Activision	●●●●	93
Twisted Metal: Head-On	Sony CEA	●●●●	93
Untold Legends: Brotherhood...	Sony Online	●●●	92
Wipeout Pure	Sony CEA	●●●●	93
World Tour Soccer	Sony CEA	●●●	93
PS2			
.hack//INFECTION	Bandai	●●●◖	65
.hack//MUTATION	Bandai	●●●●	69
.hack//OUTBREAK	Bandai	●●●●	73
.hack//QUARANTINE	Bandai	●●●●	76
18 Wheeler American Pro Trucker	Acclaim	●●●●	52
187: Ride or Die	Ubisoft	●●	98
4x4 EVO	GOD Games	●●●●	44
2002 FIFA World Cup	EA Sports	●●●●	58
Ace Combat 04: Shattered Skies	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**51**
Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War	Namco	●●●●	87
Activision Anthology	Activision	●●●●	64
Aero Elite: Combat Academy	Sega	●●●	67
The Adventures of Cookie & Cream	Agetec	●●●◖	44
Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	●●●●◖	59
Airblade	Namco	●●●●	53
Airforce Delta Strike	Konami	●●●	78
Alias	Acclaim	●●◖	81
Alien Hominid	0-3 Entertainment	●●●●	88
Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	EA Games	●●●◖	72
All-Star Baseball 2002	Acclaim	●●●◖	44
All-Star Baseball 2003	Acclaim	●●●◖	56
All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim	●●●	67
⚡All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim	●●◖	80
Alter Echo	THQ	●●	73
American Idol	Codemasters	●	77
⚡Amplitude	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Antz Extreme Racing	Empire	●◖	61
Ape Escape 2	Ubisoft	●●●●◖	70
Ape Escape: Primed & Pumped	Ubisoft	●●◖	88
Aqua Aqua	3DO	●●	42
Arc the Lad: End of Darkness	Namco	●●	95
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	Sony CEA	●●●●	70
Arctic Thunder	Midway	●	50
⚡Area 51	Midway	●●●●	90
Armored Core 2	Agetec	●●●	39
Armored Core 2: Another Age	Agetec	●●●◖	48
Armored Core 3	Agetec	●●●◖	61
Armored Core: Nexus	Agetec	●●	85
Armored Core: Nine Breaker	Agetec	●●◖	98
Army Men: Air Attack	3DO	●●●◖	44
Army Men: Green Rogue	3DO	●●	45
Army Men RTS	3DO	●●●●	56
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	3DO	●●◖	45
Asterix & Obelix Kick Buttix	Atari	●●◖	85
Astro Boy	Sega	●●●	85
Atari Anthology	Atari	●●	89
Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana	NIS America	●●●◖	94
Athens 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	83
ATV Offroad Fury	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**42**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 2	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**64**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 3	Sony CEA	●●●●	88
ATV Quad Power Racing 2	Acclaim	●●●●	66
⚡Auto Modellista	Capcom	●●◖	69
Backyard Baseball	Atari	●●◖	81
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	Eidos	●●◖	75
Backyard Wrestling 2: There Goes the Neighborhood	Eidos	●◖	89
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	**Interplay**	●●●●◖	**52**
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	Interplay	●●●◖	77
Barbarian	Titus	●●	57
The Bard's Tale	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	86
Bass Strike Virtual Fishing Tournament	THQ	●◖	51
Batman Begins	EA Games	●●●	96
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubisoft	●●	74
Batman: Vengeance	Ubisoft	●●●	51
Battle Assault 3	Bandai	●●◖	88
Battle Engine Aquila	Atari	●●●◖	65
Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi Universal	●●●	76
Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance	Capcom	●●	97
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	●●●●	75
Big Mutha Truckers	Empire	●●●	71
Big Mutha Truckers 2: Truck Me Harder	THQ	●●●	98
Bionicle: The Game	EA Games	●●◖	75
Black & Bruised	Majesco	●●●●	67
Blade II	Activision	●●	62
Blood Omen 2	Eidos	●●●◖	57
BloodRayne	Majesco	●●●◖	63
BloodRayne 2	Majesco	●●●●◖	87
Blood Will Tell	Sega	●●●●	87
Bloody Roar 3	Activision	●●●◖	47
Bloody Roar 4	Konami	●	75
Blowout	Majesco	●●●	77
BMX XXX	Acclaim	●◖	65
Bombastic	Capcom	●●◖	72
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	●●●●	67
Britney's Dance Beat	THQ	●●●●	58
⚡Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	●●●	92
The Bouncer	Square EA	●●●	42
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: CB	Sierra/Fox	●●●◖	73
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	Bam	●●●●	82
Burnout	Acclaim	●●●●◖	52
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	●●●●	63
⚡Burnout 3: Takedown	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**85**
⚡Burnout Revenge	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**98**
Butt-Ugly Martians: Zoom or Doom!	Crave	●●	73
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	**Activision**	●●◖	**67**
Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2005 Adv.	Activision	●●●	90
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	**Activision**	●●◖	**76**
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2004 Season	Activision	●●◖	74
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season	Activision	●●●●◖	85
⚡Call of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	●●●●	89
Capcom Fighting Evolution	Capcom	●◖	88
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	●●●●◖	51
Carmen Sandiego: The Secret of the Stolen Drums	Bam	●●◖	77
CART Fury	Midway	●	47
Casper: Spirit Dimensions	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	50
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	Konami	●●●●	74
The Cat in the Hat	Vivendi Universal	●●	76
Catwoman	EA Games	●	84
⚡Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	**Sony Online**	●●●●◖	**78**
⚡Champions: Return to Arms	Sony Online	●●●●◖	90
Chaos Legion	Capcom	●●●◖	70
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	2K Games	◖	97
⚡Chessmaster	Ubisoft	●●●◖	70
Choplifter: Crisis Shield	Xicat	●●●	69
ChoroQ	Atlus	●●●◖	86
City Crisis	Take-Two	●●●	48
Clock Tower 3	Capcom	●●●	68
Cold Fear	Ubisoft	●●●	92
Cold Winter	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	93
Colin McRae Rally 3	**Codemasters**	●●●●●	**68**
Colosseum: Road to Freedom	Koei	●●◖	95
Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Acclaim	●●●	83
Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos	●●	62
Conflict: Desert Storm	**Gotham Games**	●◖	**63**
Conflict: Desert Storm II	Gotham Games	●●●	74
Conflict: Vietnam	Global Star	●●◖	86
Conflict Zone	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Constantine	THQ	●●●	92
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	●●●●◖	64
Corvette	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Cool Boarders 2001	Sony CEA	●●●●	46
Crash Bandicoot: Wrath of Cortex	**Universal**	●●●◖	**51**
⚡Crash 'N' Burn	Eidos	●●	87
Crash Nitro Kart	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●◖	**76**
Crash Twinsanity	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	86
Crazy Taxi	**Acclaim**	●●●●	**46**
Crimson Sea 2	Koei	●●●◖	80
Crimson Tears	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubisoft	●●	74
Culdcept	SNK	●●●◖	75
Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse	Metro3D	●◖	49
Dark Cloud	**Sony CEA**	●●●●◖	**46**
Dark Cloud 2	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**66**
Dark Summit	THQ	●●●◖	52
Darkwatch	Capcom	●●●	96
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	**Acclaim**	●●●◖	**50**
DDR Extreme	Konami	●●●●	85
⚡DDR Extreme 2	Konami	●●●●◖	98
DDRMAX	Konami	●●●●	63
DDRMAX 2	Konami	●●●●	74
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	●●●●◖	39
Dead to Rights	**Namco**	●●●	**65**
Dead to Rights II	Namco	●●	94
Death by Degrees	Namco	●◖	90
Def Jam Vendetta	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●	**67**
Def Jam Fight for NY	EA Games	●●●●◖	85
Defender	Midway	●●●◖	62
Destroy All Humans!	THQ	●●●	95
⚡Destruction Derby Arenas	Gathering	●●◖	80
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	●●●●◖	56
Devil Kings	Capcom	●◖	98
Devil May Cry	**Capcom**	●●●●●	**50**
Devil May Cry 2	**Capcom**	●●●	**66**
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening	Capcom	●●●●◖	91
DICE: DNA Integrated Cybernetic Enterprises	Bandai	◖	98
Digimon Rumble Arena 2	Bandai	●●●	88
Digimon World 4	Bandai	●●	94
Digital Hitz Factory	XS Games	●●●●	76
Dino Stalker	Capcom	●●●◖	61
Disaster Report	Agetec	●●●◖	65
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	Atlus	●●●●	72
Disney Golf	EA Games	●●●●	61



THE TRUTH HERTZ

Amplitude, the sequel to the music-rhythm game *Frequency*, lets you remix popular songs on the fly with only a controller. It was developed by Harmonix, the same developer behind the *Karaoke Revolution* series and the rawking *Guitar Hero*.



DEUS EXY

Crystal Dynamics was said to be working on a sequel to the philosophical first-person shooter *Deus Ex*, but rumor has it that after working on the game for a bit, the studio decided to use the technology for a new property called *Snowblind*.

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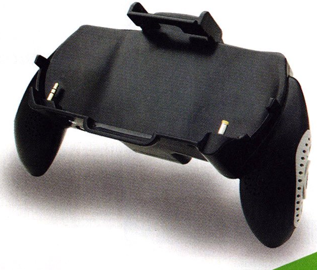

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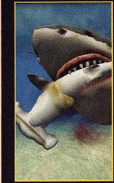
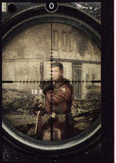
GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure	Activision	●●●●	73
Disney's PK: Out of the Shadows	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Disney's Treasure Planet	Sony CEA	●●●◖	64
A Dog's Life	Hip Interactive	●●	84
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	Ubisoft	●●●◖	42
Downforce	Titus	●●	57
Downhill Domination	Sony CEA	●●●●	71
Dr. Muto	Midway	●●◖	63
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	**Atari**	●●●◖	**65**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	**Atari**	●●◖	**76**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3	Atari	●●●●	88
Dragon Ball Z: Sagas	Atari	●●◖	93
Dragon Rage	3DO	●◖	54
Drakan: The Ancients' Gates	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
Drakengard	Square Enix USA	●●	78
DRIV3R	Atari	●●●◖	83
Driven	Bam	●	52
Driving Emotion Type-S	Square EA	●●◖	41
Drome Racers	EA Games	●●◖	64
Dropship	Bam	●●●●	57
Dual Hearts	Atlus	●●●	61
Duel Masters	Atari	●●●	89
The Dukes of Hazzard: Return of the General Lee	Ubisoft	●●●◖	87
Dynasty Tactics	Koei	●●●●◖	61
Dynasty Tactics 2	Koei	●●●●	74
Dynasty Warriors 2	Koei	●●●●	38
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	●●●●	52
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	65
Dynasty Warriors 4	**Koei**	●●●●	**85**
Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	Koei	●●●●◖	68
Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	75
Dynasty Warriors 5	Koei	●●●◖	92
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	Acclaim	●●◖	56
Echo Night: Beyond	Agetec	●●●	84
Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness	Kemco	●●◖	61
⚡eJay Clubworld	Crave	●●	73
Endgame	Empire	●●	59
Enter the Matrix	**Atari**	●●●	**71**
Enthusia Professional Racing	Konami	●●◖	93
Ephemeral Fantasia	Konami	●◖	49
Escape From Monkey Island	**LucasArts**	●●●●●	**46**
⚡ESPN College Hoops	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	76
⚡ESPN College Hoops 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	88
ESPN International Track & Field	Konami	●●●	39
ESPN International Winter Sports 2002	Konami	●●●●	54
⚡ESPN Major League Baseball	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	80
ESPN MLS Extra Time	Konami	●●	44
ESPN National Hockey Night	Konami	●◖	45
ESPN NBA 2Night	Konami	●●	42
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002	Konami	●●●	56
⚡ESPN NBA 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	87
⚡ESPN NBA Basketball	**ESPN Videogames**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡ESPN NFL Football	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	72
⚡ESPN NFL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	84
⚡ESPN NHL Hockey	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	73
⚡ESPN NHL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	85
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	Konami	●●●	41
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2002	Konami	●●●	53
ESPN X Games Skateboarding	Konami	●●●●	49
Eternal Ring	Agetec	●●	38
Eve of Extinction	Eidos	●●◖	56
Everblue 2	Capcom	●●●	66
Evergrace	Agetec	●●	39
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures	Sony Online	●●◖	66
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	Sony Online	●●●◖	77
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ	●●●	70
Evil Dead: Regeneration	THQ	●●●◖	98
Evil Twin	Ubisoft	●●	52
Evolution Skateboarding	Konami	●●◖	63
Evolution Snowboarding	Konami	●	65
Extermination	Sony CEA	●●◖	48
Extreme-G III	Acclaim	●●●●	50
EyeToy: AntiGrav	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
EyeToy: Groove	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	80
EyeToy: Kinetic	Sony CEA	●●●●	98
EyeToy: Play 2	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	96
F1 2001	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**52**
F1 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	60
F1 Career Challenge	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**71**
F1 Championship	Ubisoft	●●●●	43
F1 Championship Season 2000	EA Sports	●●◖	41
Fairly OddParents: Shadow Showdown	THQ	●●●◖	88
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Interplay	●●◖	78
Fantastic 4	Activision	●●●◖	96
Fantavision	Sony CEA	●●●●	40
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	●●●●	55
Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Tecmo	●●●●	77
Ferrari F355 Challenge	Sega	●●	61
⚡FIFA 06	EA Sports	●●●●◖	98
FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●◖	39
FIFA 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
FIFA Soccer 2003	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2005	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**86**
⚡FIFA Street	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Fight Club	Vivendi Universal	●◖	87
⚡Fight Night 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●	**80**
⚡Fight Night Round 2	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
Fighter Maker 2	Agetec	●◖	64
Final Fantasy X	**Square EA**	●●●●●	**53**
Final Fantasy X-2	**Square Enix USA**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡Final Fantasy XI	**Square Enix USA**	●●●●●	**78**
⚡Final Fantasy XI: Chains of Promathia	Square Enix USA	●●●●	87
Finding Nemo	**THQ**	●●●◖	**71**
Finny the Fish and the Seven Waters	Natsume	●●	91
Fireblade	Midway	●●◖	59
Fisherman's Challenge	Konami	●●	67
FlatOut	Empire Interactive	●●◖	95
Flipnic: Ultimate Pinball	Capcom	●●●	95
Ford Racing 2	Gotham Games	●●◖	76
Ford Racing 3	2K Games	●●●	94
Forever Kingdom	Agetec	●◖	53
Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone	Atari	●●●◖	86
Formula One 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	50
Freaky Flyers	Midway	●●●◖	72
Freedom Fighters	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**73**
Freekstyle	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●	**59**
Freestyle Metal X	Midway	●●●	71
Frequency	Sony CEA	●●●◖	52
Frogger: The Great Quest	Konami	●◖	53
Frogger's Adventure: The Rescue	Konami	●●◖	76
Front Mission 4	Square Enix	●●●●	82
Fugitive Hunter	Encore	●	76
⚡Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	●●●●	93
Fullmetal Alchemist	Square Enix	●●●	89
Fullmetal Alchemist 2: Curse of Crimson Elixir	Square Enix	●●●	96
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	Acclaim	●●●	46
Futurama	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	72
Future Tactics: The Uprising	Crave	●●●◖	81
G1 Jockey 3	Koei	●●●◖	69
Gadget Racers	Conspiracy	●●●◖	50
Galactic Wrestling Featuring Ultimate Muscle	Bandai	●●◖	82
Galerians: Ash	Sammy	●◖	66
Gallop Racer	Tecmo	●●	48
Gallop Racer 2003: A New Breed	Tecmo	●●●	69
Gallop Racer 2004	Tecmo	●●●●	85
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	Midway	●●●◖	46
Genji: Dawn of the Samurai	Sony CEA	●●●●	98
The Getaway	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**66**
The Getaway: Black Monday	Sony CEA	●●	89
Get on da Mic	Eidos	●●	87
Ghosthunter	Namco	●●◖	84
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex	Bandai	●●	87
⚡Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	●●●	89
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	●●●◖	51
Gitaroo-Man	Koei	●●●◖	53
Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	Acclaim	●●	75
Gladius	LucasArts	●●●●	74
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	Jaleco	●●◖	76
God of War	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**92**
GoDai: Elemental Force	3DO	●◖	54
Godzilla: Save the Earth	Atari	●●◖	88
⚡GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	EA Games	●●●	89
Gradius III and IV	Konami	●●◖	39
Gradius V	Konami	●●●◖	85
Graffiti Kingdom	Hot-B	●●●●	93
Gran Turismo 3: A-spec	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**46**
Gran Turismo 4	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**91**
Grand Prix Challenge	Atari	●●●◖	68
Grand Theft Auto III	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**52**
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**87**
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**63**
Grandia II	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Grandia Xtreme	Enix	●●●◖	62
Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt	Midway	◖	61
The Great Escape	Gotham Games	●●●◖	72
⚡Gretzky NHL 2005	Sony CEA	●●◖	88
⚡Growlanser Generations	Working Designs	●●●●	88
GTC Africa	Majesco	●●◖	58
Guilty Gear Isuka	Sammy	●●●●	86
Guilty Gear X	Majesco/Sammy	●●●●	51
Guilty Gear X2	Sammy	●●●●	66
Guitar Hero	RedOctane	●●●●◖	98
Gungrave	Sega	●●●◖	61
Gungrave: Overdose	Mastiff	●●●◖	86
GunGriffon Blaze	Working Designs	●●●◖	39
The Guy Game	Gathering	●	85
Half-Life	**Sierra**	●●●●●	**51**
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	**EA Games**	●●●	**75**
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	EA Games	●◖	76
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	**EA Games**	●●●◖	**64**
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	EA Games	●●●●	82
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Natsume	●●●●	51
Haunted Mansion	TDK	●●●	77
Haunting Ground	Capcom	●●◖	93
Haven: Call of the King	Midway	●●●◖	64
Headhunter	Acclaim	●●●	57
Headhunter: Redemption	Sega	●●●	86
Herdy Gerdy	Eidos	●●●	56
Heroes of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	46
Hidden Invasion	Conspiracy	●●●	60
High Heat MLB 2002	3DO	●●●●	44
High Heat MLB 2003	3DO	●●●●◖	55
High Heat MLB 2004	**3DO**	●●●●●	**67**
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	●●●●◖	81
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	**Eidos**	●●●●◖	**63**
The Hobbit	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	76
Hot Shots Golf 3	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**55**
⚡Hot Shots Golf Fore!	Sony CEA	●●●◖	85
⚡Hot Wheels: Stunt Track Challenge	THQ	●●●◖	89
Hot Wheels: Velocity X	THQ	●●◖	64
The Hulk	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●●	**70**
Hunter: The Reckoning–Wayward	Interplay	●●◖	72
Hypersonic Xtreme	Majesco	●●◖	67
I-Ninja	Namco	●●●◖	75
Ico	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**50**
In the Groove	RedOctane	●●●◖	94
The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	96
The Incredibles	THQ	●●●◖	88
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts	●●●	71
Indigo Prophecy	Atari	●●●●	98
Indy Car Series	Codemasters	●●●	71
Intellivision Lives!	Crave	●●●◖	77
Inuyasha: Fuedal Combat	Bandai	●●	97
Inuyasha: The Secret of the Cursed Mask	Bandai	●	89
Island Extreme Stunts	EA Games	●●●◖	65
The Italian Job	Eidos	●●	72
Jade Cocoon 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**52**
Jak II	**Sony CEA**	●●●◖	**74**
Jak 3	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire	**EA Games**	●●●●	**52**
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**79**
James Bond 007: NightFire	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**64**
James Cameron's Dark Angel	Sierra	●●	65



PARADIGM SHIFT Appaloosa, a developer that made a name for itself creating the underwater adventures of Ecco the Dolphin, has turned its watery prowess toward a darker end: turning human swimmers into floating gobs in *Jaws Unleashed.*



TAKE AIM If you dig the long-range, murder-simulating, Jack Thompson–instigating action of *Silent Scope,* you may enjoy the destined-to-be-overlooked *Sniper Elite.*

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- IGN.com

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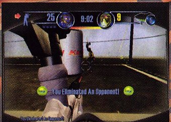
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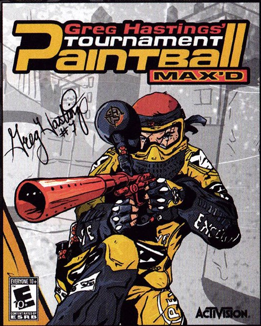
Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball II MAX'D
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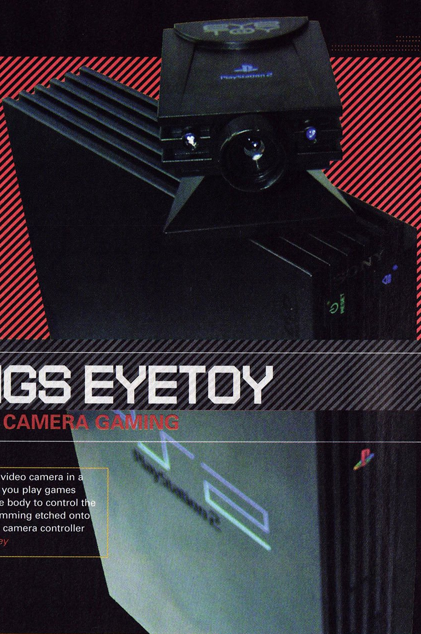


ALL THINGS EYETOY

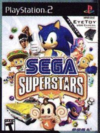
THE STATE OF VIDEO CAMERA GAMING

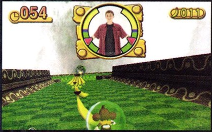
The EyeToy itself is nothing special, a grainy video camera in a PS2-themed plastic box. All the unique ways you play games with it—using your arms, legs, head, or entire body to control the action—are feats of game design and programming etched onto EyeToy game discs. Here's a look at what the camera controller wizards have pulled off so far. « *Robert Ashley*

SEGA SUPERSTARS

Pub. Sega Dev. Sega

Sony's EyeToy titles are full of great game ideas, but they come wrapped in art and character design that tickle your gag reflex: saturated colors and bug-eyed extreme dudes. Sega's offering for the camera controller brings along the company's stable of memorable characters but goes a little light on game design. It's a mixed bag of quality minigames (the hand-controlled *Super Monkey Ball* is brilliant) and slapped-together distractions (the *Crazy Taxi* game asks for nothing more than flailing around and yelling, randomly). That said, *Superstars* remains the only third-party EyeToy game worth playing.

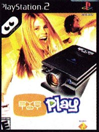


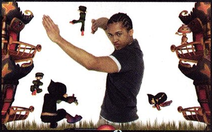


EYETOY: PLAY

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony CEE

Play succeeds in large part because it taps into the EyeToy's secret strength: It forces you to look like a complete jackass, making *Play* an excellent party game. The EyeToy's original pack-in game is a tech demo of sorts, a collection of simple minigames that explore the camera's gameplay possibilities. Projecting your image onto your TV, the games are all variations on one simple concept: touch the stuff. Karate-chop the ninjas, wash the screen, punch the robot, pop the ghosts—all very simple, most very fun. And without the intimidating array of buttons and analog sticks that make up a standard controller, your nongaming friends and family might actually be willing to put in some game time.

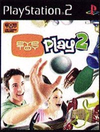


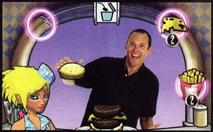


EYETOY: PLAY 2

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony CEE

Proof that the EyeToy is a work in progress, this second collection of minigames keeps better tabs on your body, enabling more nuanced movement and deeper, though still simple, games. In fact, some of these games—with a little padding—could even stand alone. Mr. Chef, a cartoony take on manning the grill at a burger joint, is the best of the lot, packing in plenty of different movements and goals (such as chopping vegetables, filling sodas, assembling burgers, and so on). It might sound lame, but cranking out the fast food orders is strangely compelling.





EYETOY: GROOVE

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony CEE

Rhythm games are a perfect fit for the EyeToy crowd (which is basically defined as folks who aren't afraid to get off the couch and make fools of themselves). *Groove*'s hook is all about hitting targets with your hands to the beat of the music (licensed tunes ranging from the Village People's "YMCA" to Madonna's "Music"). While it may not have as many unlockables as a lot of rhythm games out there, it's still one of the camera's best apps.

EYETOY: ANTIGRAV

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony CEE

The future of the EyeToy has little to do with the grainy-video minigames that have so far dominated the device. Controlling traditional onscreen characters with body movements is the main event. There are plenty of kinks to be worked out, but *AntiGrav* makes serious strides toward the goal. On the surface, *AntiGrav* is yet another futuristic extreme-sports game, but piloting the game's cast of attitude-burdened hoverboarders works like nothing you've ever played. You jump to jump, duck to duck, lean left to drift left, and lean right to drift right. The motion tracking isn't perfect, but when it works, it works well.

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION EXTREME

Pub. Konami Dev. Konami

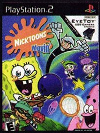
The familiar floor mat phenomenon gets an EyeToy makeover—in fact, the EyeToy components are the only thing distinguishing this title from what has become a long stream of very similar *DDR* games. *Extreme* offers gamers a few choices—use the EyeToy to provide a backdrop to your moves, play a minigame that requires you to keep the screen clear of plant growth by flailing your arms, or add rhythmic hand motions to the usual dance steps, an inventive twist on this fast-aging franchise.

PERFECT!!
STAGE 1st

NICKTOONS MOVIN'

Pub. THQ Dev. Mass Media

Yet another collection of video minigames, this time featuring the kid-friendly properties of Nickelodeon. *Nicktoons Movin'* retreads familiar territory, as Jimmy Neutron, SpongeBob SquarePants, the Fairly OddParents, and others adorn versions of games in the vein of *Play*'s touch-the-stuff genre. Fat camp is probably a better investment for your overstuffed kid, but seeing the faces of TV friends might get them off the couch for a few minutes.

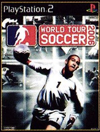
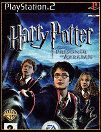
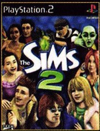
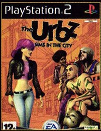


EYETOY: KINETIC

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony CEE

Anyone who's spent a few minutes playing an EyeToy game will speak of the sweat involved. For the average gamer, using more than your hands to play a game is serious work. *Kinetic* focuses on this physicality with a suite of exercise games and AI-supervised workouts. The games aren't quite as fun as the lighter EyeToy titles, but detailed advice on specific movements and handy workout scheduling make *Kinetic* the perfect EyeToy game for fitness freaks or tubby couch potatoes who want to save their gym fees for the holiday games feast.

EyeToy Kinetic

THE REST

Many traditional games, especially sports titles, have added limited EyeToy functions as bonus features.

Gretzky NHL '06, MLB 2006, World Tour Soccer 2006, Tony Hawk's Underground 2

Each of these games allows you to paste a snapshot of your face to the head of a custom athlete. Great for vain ex-high-school quarterbacks or those imaginative enough to snap pictures of other body parts for comedic purposes.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

A suite of EyeToy minigames comes packed in as bonus material with this otherwise typical youngster-targeted adventure game.

The Urbz: Sims in the City

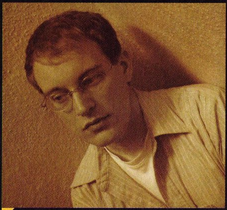
As your Urb gets famous, your mug shot goes up on billboards and T-shirts all over town.

The Sims 2

Use your EyeToy to create and customize your own items in the game. Apply any of a set of artistic treatments to an EyeToy shot and then turn it into art for your Sims' homes.

PS1-DERLAND

SMALL TOWNS, BIG OBSESSIONS



JEREMY PARISH

When he's not trying to reclaim his vanished youth with obsolete games, Jeremy works as 1UP.com's features editor and charming mascot. Check out his blog at toastyfrog.1UP.com.

We in the gaming press sometimes forget that not everyone lives in big cities. Except me. I *can't forget*. I grew up in a part of Texas where the closest city of decent size was three hours away—where it was cheaper to buy a house than a car. I still have nightmares about it.

It's tough to feed your classic-gaming addiction in Middle America, where people prefer games on the gridiron to those on consoles. You're probably surrounded by people who own PS2s and Xboxes, but their collections tend to begin at *Madden* and end at *GTA*. They might have dim memories of their PS1s, but chances are that generation is all but forgotten.

Still, it's not so bad if you know how to make the most of your situation. I spent the entirety of the PlayStation era in the city of "Big Country" (name changed to protect the innocent) and I came out just as nerdy as ever. Maybe nerdier! As it happens, the very things that make small cities so frustrating for retro gamers and collectors can be assets, too.

For starters, there's a pretty good chance that your neighbors won't appreciate a good thing when they see it. Admittedly, eBay has taught the world that there's money to be made on just about anything old, so great deals are getting pretty rare. Still, keep your eyes peeled, just in case. Plenty of PS1 games command prices of $50, $60, even $100—especially RPGs like *Valkyrie Profile* and *Suikoden II*. With a little luck, you can find them for a fraction of that.

And don't forget the pawnshops and flea markets, potential treasure troves of derelict PS1 games being peddled by bored retirees who are always happy to cut a deal for anyone who'll listen to them talk about the old days (or their goiter, or whatever it is old people talk about).

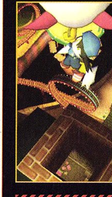
But the best part is that life in small-town America is so darned *cheap*. You don't really appreciate it until you start your San Francisco morning with a cup of coffee that costs as much as a full meal in Topeka. But in a Podunk town, all that money you're *not* spending on the cost of living will be a huge asset when you need to grab those games you've been hunting for.

DON'T FORGET THE PAWNSHOPS AND FLEA MARKETS.

Another nice thing about small towns is that the people there are, well, *nice*. Try to buddy up to store clerks in L.A. or New York and you'll find yourself manhandled out the door by security. But game-store employees in small towns are likely to appreciate their regulars; get to know them and you can reap the benefits...and, if you're especially charming, perhaps talk them into holding hard-to-find used games for you.

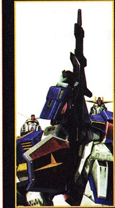
Your small-town neighbors may call you weird for taking such a strategic approach to acquiring old games, but who cares what they think? They're painting their faces to support the local high school's football team; you're rocking out to *Incredible Crisis*. Advantage: you. «

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Jeopardy!	Atari	●●◖	77
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World	Acclaim	●	53
Jet X20	Sony CEA	●●	63
Jimmy Neutron: Attack of the Twonkies	THQ	●●●	88
Jonny Moseley Mad Trix	3DO	●◖	54
Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death	Evolved Games	●●◖	80
Juiced	THQ	●●●◖	94
The Jungle Book: Rhythm n' Groove	Ubisoft	●●●	69
Jurassic Park: Op. Genesis	Universal Int.	●●●●◖	68
K-1 World Grand Prix	Konami	●●	71
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	●●●●	75
Karaoke Revolution Volume 2	Konami	●●●●◖	83
Karaoke Revolution Volume 3	Konami	●●●●◖	87
Katamari Damacy	Namco	●●●●◖	86
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	Activision	●●●◖	61
Kengo: Master of Bushido	Crave	●●●	42
Kessen	EA Games	●●●	39
Kessen II	Koei	●●●	51
Kessen III	Koei	●●●	91
kill.switch	Namco	●●●●◖	75
Killer 7	Capcom	●●◖	95
⚡Killzone	Sony CEA	●●●●	87
Kinetica	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	50
King Arthur	Konami	●	88
King of Fighters 2000/2001	SNK Playmore	●●◖	76
King of Fighters 2002/2003	SNK Playmore	●●●●	88
King of Fighters: Maximum Impact	SNK Playmore	●●●	87
The King of Route 66	Sega	●●●	67
King's Field: The Ancient City	Agetec	●●	55
Kingdom Hearts	**Square EA**	**●●●●◖**	**61**
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	●●●●◖	47
Knockout Kings 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	42
Knockout Kings 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Kuon	Agetec	●●◖	87
Kya: Dark Lineage	Atari	●●◖	76
La Pucelle: Tactics	Mastiff	●●●●	81
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	●●◖	48
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Eidos	●●◖	76
Legaia 2: Duel Saga	Fresh Games	●●●	63
The Legend of Alon D'ar	Ubisoft	●◖	54
The Legend of Kay	Capcom	●●●	97
Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●●◖	53
Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim	●●●	65
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	Midway	●●●	59
Lego Racers 2	Lego Media	●●◖	51
Lego Star Wars	Giant Int.	●●●●	92
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	87
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events	Activision	●●	89
Lethal Skies	Sammy	●●●	58
Lethal Skies II	Sammy	●●●◖	74
Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA Games	●	76
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Black Label	●●●◖	63
⚡The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**75**
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age	EA Games	●●	88
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**63**
Lowrider	Jaleco	●◖	77
Lupin the 3rd: Treasure of the Sorcerer King	Bandai	●●●◖	78
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi Universal	●●	71
Mad Maestro!	Eidos/Fresh	●●●	56
Madagascar	Activision	●●●	96
Madden NFL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●◖	38
Madden NFL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
⚡Madden NFL 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡Madden NFL 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**72**
⚡Madden NFL 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
⚡Madden NFL 06	EA Sports	●●●●◖	96
Mafia	Gathering	●●●◖	79
Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color	Agetec	●●●●	69
⚡Major League Baseball 2K5	2K Games	●●●●	91
Makai Kingdom	NIS America	●●●◖	96
Malice	Mud Duck	●●◖	84
Manhunt	**Rockstar**	**●●●◖**	**76**
The Mark of Kri	Sony CEA	●●●	59
Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	EA Games	●●	98
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom	●●●●	61
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	Activision	●●●●	60
Max Payne	**Rockstar**	**●●●●**	**53**
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Rockstar	●●●◖	77
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	**Capcom**	**●●●◖**	**54**
Maximo vs. Army of Zin	Capcom	●●●●	77
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami	◖	84
MDK2 Armageddon	Interplay	●●●◖	45
Medal of Honor: European Assault	EA Games	●●●●	95
Medal of Honor: Frontline	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**58**
⚡Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	**EA Games**	**●●●◖**	**76**
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Mega Man X: Command Mission	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Mega Man X7	Capcom	●●●◖	74
Mega Man X8	Capcom	●●●	88
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	Infogrames	●●◖	60
Mercenaries	LucasArts	●●●●◖	89
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi Universal	●●●●	75
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**51**
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**67**
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**88**
Metropolismania	Natsume	●●●	61
Midnight Club	**Rockstar**	**●●●●**	**39**
⚡Midnight Club II	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**67**
⚡Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	●●●●	93



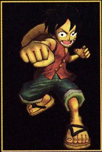
SEQUEL, PLEASE

If you like cute, quirky platformers, check out *Klonoa*. The original game was a joy on the PS1, and the sequel, *Lunatea's Veil*, brought the love to PS2 in gorgeous cel-shaded glory. We're happy with our *Katamaris* and our *Soul Caliburs*, Namco, but don't forget about *Klonoa*!



COINCIDENCE?

You know how *Star Trek* movies have this thing where only the even-numbered ones are any good? *Mobile Suit Gundam* has something similar: If there's no "Z" in the title, avoid it.



ON THE BRAWL

If you're a fan of 3D brawlers like *Powerstone* or *Smash Bros.*, do yourself a favor and check out the surprisingly decent *One Piece: Grand Battle*. It only supports two players, but it's still an entertaining arena-based fighter.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Midway Arcade Treasures	Midway	●●●◖	76
Midway Arcade Treasures 2	Midway	●●●●	87
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	Codemasters	●	58
Minority Report	Activision	●●◖	65
Mission: Impossible–Operation Surma	Atari	●●	77
Mister Mosquito	Eidos/Fresh	●●●◖	56
MLB 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	67
⚡MLB 2005	Sony CEA	●●●◖	80
⚡MLB 2006	Sony CEA	●●●◖	91
MLB SlugFest 20-03	Midway	●●●●	59
MLB SlugFest 20-04	Midway	●●●●	67
⚡MLB SlugFest: Loaded	Midway	●●●◖	83
Mobile Light Force 2	XS Games	●●●◖	69
Mobile Suit Gundam: Encounters in Space	Bandai	●	75
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon	Bandai	●●●◖	61
Mobile Suit Gundam: Gundam vs. Zeta Gundam	Bandai	●●●	96
Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo	Bandai	●	48
Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front	Bandai	●●●	54
Mojo!	Crave	●●◖	73
Monopoly Party	Infogrames	●●●	65
Monster 4x4: Masters of Metal	Ubisoft	●●◖	77
Monster Hunter	Capcom	●●●●	86
Monster Rancher 3	Tecmo	●●●●	50
Monster Rancher 4	Tecmo	●●●◖	75
Monsters, Inc.	Sony CEA	●●●◖	55
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	**Midway**	**●●●●**	**64**
⚡Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	●●●●	87
Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	Midway	●●●●	98
MotoGP	Namco	●●●●	39
MotoGP 2	Namco	●●●●◖	53
MotoGP 3	Namco	●●●●◖	67
Motor Mayhem	Infogrames	●●●	47
MTV Music Generator 2	Codemasters	●●●	46
MTV Music Generator 3: This Is the Remix	Codemasters	●●●◖	82
MTV's Celebrity Deathmatch	Gotham Games	●◖	76
⚡MTX: Mototrax	Activision	●●◖	80
The Mummy Returns	Universal	●◖	52
Musashi Samurai Legend	Square Enix	●●●	91
Music Maker	Magix	●●●●	69
MVP Baseball 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	67
⚡MVP Baseball 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	80
⚡MVP Baseball 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●●	47
MX Rider	Infogrames	●●●◖	52
MX Superfly Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●◖	59
MX Unleashed	**THQ**	**●●●**	**79**
⚡MX vs. ATV Unleashed	THQ	●●●●	91
⚡My Street	Sony CEA	●●●	67
Myst III: Exile	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Mystic Heroes	Koei	●●◖	64
Namco Museum	**Namco**	**●●●◖**	**53**
Namco Museum 50th Anniv. Arcade Collection	Namco	●●●●	98
Nano Breaker	Konami	●●◖	90
NARC	Midway	◖	93
NASCAR 2001	EA Sports	●●◖	40
⚡NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**85**
⚡NASCAR 06: Total Team Control	EA Sports	●●●●◖	97
NASCAR Heat	Infogrames	●●●●	47
NASCAR Thunder 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
NASCAR Thunder 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●◖**	**62**
⚡NASCAR Thunder 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**73**
NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	Infogrames	●●●◖	63
Naval Ops: Warship Gunner	Koei	●●●	71
NBA 2K2	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**53**
⚡NBA 2K3	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**63**
NBA Ballers	**Midway Sports**	**●●●●**	**80**
NBA Hoopz	Midway	●●●	44
NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	●●◖	75
NBA Live 2001	EA Sports	●●●	42
NBA Live 2002	EA Sports	●●◖	51
⚡NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	●●●●	63
⚡NBA Live 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	75
⚡NBA Live 2005	EA Sports	●●●●	86
⚡NBA Live 06	EA Sports	●●●	98
NBA ShootOut 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	44
NBA ShootOut 2003	Sony CEA	●●●	63
⚡NBA ShootOut 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	75
NBA Starting Five	Konami	●●◖	63
NBA Street	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**47**
NBA Street Vol. 2	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**68**
⚡NBA Street V3	EA Sports Big	●●●●◖	90
⚡NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	64
NCAA College Football 2K3	Sega Sports	●●◖	60
NCAA Final Four 2001	Sony CEA	●	41
NCAA Final Four 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	52
NCAA Final Four 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	64
⚡NCAA Final Four 2004	Sony CEA	●●	76
NCAA Football 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
NCAA Football 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡NCAA Football 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**71**
⚡NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
⚡NCAA Football 06	Konami	●●	95
NCAA GameBreaker 2001	Sony CEA	●◖	41
NCAA GameBreaker 2003	Sony CEA	●●	61
⚡NCAA GameBreaker 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	73
NCAA March Madness 2002	EA Sports	●●●	53
NCAA March Madness 2003	EA Sports	●●●	64
⚡NCAA March Madness 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	76
⚡NCAA March Madness 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	88
⚡NCAA March Madness 06	EA Sports	●●●●	98
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**62**
⚡Need for Speed Underground	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**76**
⚡Need for Speed Underground 2	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Neo Contra	Konami	●●●◖	87
NFL 2K2	**Sega Sports**	**●●●◖**	**52**
⚡NFL 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
NFL Blitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	55
NFL Blitz 20-03	Midway	●●●◖	60
⚡NFL Blitz Pro	Midway Sports	●●●	74
NFL GameDay 2001	Sony CEA	●	40
NFL GameDay 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	53
⚡NFL GameDay 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	61
⚡NFL GameDay 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	73
NFL Quarterback Club 2001	Acclaim	●●◖	50
⚡NFL Street	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●◖**	**78**
⚡NFL Street 2	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	89
NHL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	38
NHL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	50
NHL 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	63
⚡NHL 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	73
⚡NHL 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	85
⚡NHL 06	EA Sports	●●●	96
NHL 2K3	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**64**
NHL FaceOff 2001	Sony CEA	●●●◖	43
NHL FaceOff 2003	Sony CEA	●●	64
NHL Hitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	51
NHL Hitz 20-03	Midway	●●●●◖	62
⚡NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	●●●●	73
Nick Toons: Movin'	THQ	●●●	88
Nightmare of Druaga	Namco	●●	87
Ninja Assault	Namco	●●◖	61
No One Lives Forever	Sierra	●●●◖	56
Obscure	DreamCatcher	●●	93
Okage: Shadow King	Sony CEA	●●●	51
One Piece: Grand Battle	Bandai	●●●◖	98
Oni	Rockstar	●◖	43
Onimusha: Warlords	**Capcom**	**●●●●**	**43**
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	Capcom	●●●●	60
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	Capcom	●●●●◖	81
Orphen: Scion of Sorcery	Activision	●●●	39
⚡Outlaw Golf 2	Global Star	●◖	88
⚡Outlaw Tennis	Global Star	●●●◖	97
Pac-Man Fever	Namco	●●	60
Pac-Man World 2	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**54**
PaRappa the Rapper 2	Sony CEA	●●●◖	53
Paris-Dakar Rally	Acclaim	●●	53
Phantom Brave	NIS America	●●●●◖	85
Pinball Hall of Fame	Crave	●◖	90
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	EA Games	●●●◖	55
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	Activision	●●	80
Playboy: The Mansion	Arush Ent.	●●	91
The Polar Express	THQ	●●●	88
Pool Paradise	Ignition	●●●◖	83
Portal Runner	3DO	●●	50
Power Drome	Mud Duck	●	84
Power Rangers: Dino Thunder	THQ	●●	88
The Powerpuff Girls: Relish Rampage	Bam	●●	65
Predator: Concrete Jungle	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	94
Pride FC	THQ	●●●●	65
Primal	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**75**
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within	Ubisoft	●●●●	88
Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	●●●●◖	65
Project Eden	Eidos	●●●◖	52
⚡Project: Snowblind	Eidos	●●●●	91
Pryzm Chapter One: The Dark Unicorn	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	60
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	●●●●◖	82
Psychonauts	Majesco	●●●●	95
P.T.O. IV	Koei	●●●	66
Pump It Up: Exceed	Mastiff	●●●	97
The Punisher	THQ	●●●◖	90
Q-Ball Billiards Master	Take-Two	●●●◖	40
Quake III: Revolution	EA Games	●●●●◖	44
R: Racing Evolution	Namco	●●●●	76
R-Type Final	Eidos/Fresh Games	●●●●	78
Radiata Stories	Square Enix	●●●◖	97
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision	●●●	64
Rapala Pro Fishing	Activision	●●◖	85
Ratchet & Clank	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**63**
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Rayman 2: Revolution	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**41**
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubisoft	●●●◖	67
Rayman Arena	Ubisoft	●●●◖	57
RC Revenge Pro	Acclaim	●●◖	41
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing Round 2	Midway	●●●●	40
Real Pool	Infogrames	●●●◖	40
Red Card Soccer 20-03	Midway	●●●	57
Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	●●●●	82
Red Faction	**THQ**	**●●●●●**	**46**
Red Faction II	THQ	●●●●	63
Red Ninja: End of Honor	Vivendi Universal	●●	92
Reel Fishing III	Natsume	●●●●	72
Reign of Fire	Bam	●●●◖	63
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	**Capcom**	**●●●●◖**	**48**
Resident Evil: Dead Aim	Capcom	●●●◖	70
⚡Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	●●●◖	81
⚡Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2	Capcom	●◖	92
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: OR	Activision	●●●◖	71
Rez	Sega	●●●●◖	53
Ribbit King	Bandai	●●●	82
Ridge Racer V	Namco	●●●●◖	38
Riding Spirits	Bam	●●●◖	61
Ring of Red	Konami	●●●●	43
Rise of the Kasai	Sony CEA	●●●◖	92
Rise to Honor	**Sony CEA**	**●●●**	**78**
⚡Risk: Global Domination	Atari	●●●●	73
RLH: Run Like Hell	Interplay	●●●	62
Road Kill	Midway	●●●●	74
Road Trip	Conspiracy	●●●●	61
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	Capcom	●●◖	74
Robotech: Invasion	Global Star	●●●	86
Robots	Vivendi Universal	●	92
Rocky	Ubisoft	●●●●	64
Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	●●◖	87
Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix	●●●●	63
Robotech: Battlecry	TDK	●●●◖	62
Rogue Ops	Kemco	●●◖	75
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII	Koei	●●◖	60
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII	Koei	●●●	73
Romance of the Three Kingdoms X	Koei	●●●◖	94
RPG Maker 2	Agetec	●●●◖	74
RPG Maker 3	Agetec	●●●	98
RTX Red Rock	LucasArts	●●	71
Rugby	EA Sports	●●●◖	48

ONES FOR THE ROAD

YOUR PSP IS MOBILE AND READY TO GO—ARE YOU?

While the PSP was primarily built for games, you can use it for music, movies, and even Web browsing, too. All those possibilities sometimes require some additional equipment, so here's a breakdown on what gear you need to eke the most out of your original $250 investment. « *Darren Gladstone*

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THE AGORAPHOBIC GAMER

A great big world waits outside your door, but don't worry, there's no need to actually interact with it. Everything you need is right here at home. The television, the PC, and, for when you need to move around the house, your PSP. Hell, we can't blame you for wanting to stay away from the direct rays of the sun, since it's hard to read the PSP's screen in bright light.

1• I-VOLUTION SUIT

For most gamers' around-the-house use, the soft cover sock that comes with the PSP value pack is more than adequate for the job at hand. Got $180 burning a hole in your pocket, though? Then perhaps you might want to make your PSP a high roller. These luxurious handcrafted leather cases for the PSP are assembled to order. Each one takes 20 days to make, but go on and pamper yourself—you're worth it. Who knows, you might actually want to go outside and show it off to your friends.

$180 and up

www.vajacases.com

2• PLAYGEAR AMP

At home, you don't need to bother with headphones, but maybe you want to use that PSP like a boom box. A number of companies think the same way you do and have made portable speakers. Unfortunately, a lot of these sound like battery-operated tin cans or a drive-through speaker. Logitech's set is the best of the bunch, as it comes with decent audio and perfectly matches the PSP's style. The only real problem (besides the price) is that audiophiles will notice the tinny treble a second after the amp powers up. But it's not like you're expecting 7.1 surround sound out of this—right?

$60

www.logitech.com

3• DOCK IT CHARGER CRADLE

You may not know it, but with a USB port, a computer can power a PSP. This means if you're already loading up your PSP with MP3s, you can unplug the power supply from its outlet and chuck it in a drawer. Don't pay attention to the cheap plastic stand and the hypnotic glowing part on the front of the cradle. The real deal is the handy cable in the box. With it, you can hook into your PC and draw juice from it to power your PSP.

$10

www.inteclink.com

4• AUDIO KIT

You won't need everything in the audio kit, just the USB cable and chamois bag (toss the craptastic headphones in the garbage). It's always good to have an extra USB cable handy, but the real selling point here is the chamois bag. As you already know, the PSP's screen is in constant need of wiping because almost everything smudges it. Think of this sack as your PSP's car wash. One trip through and it's wiped clean. Between wipe-downs, that sack can also stash any additional wires.

$15

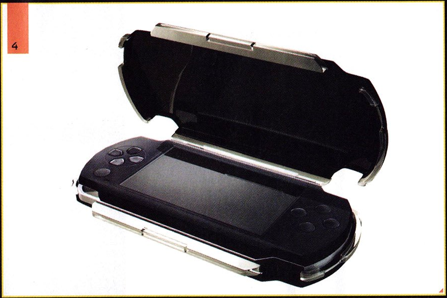
www.madcatz.com

5• PELICAN ACCESSORIES FACE ARMOR AND JACKETS

Working like an outfielder's flip-down shades, the nerdy Face Armor is a total waste (screw it in too far on the front of the PSP and you can't even eject a disc). The real reason to spend $10 is for the four UMD disc jackets thrown in. The slim disc jackets latch onto the back of your UMDs. They are by no means rugged and road-ready, but around the house, these work wonders. If Pelican ever sells these jackets separately, buy 'em in bulk!

$10

www.pelicanacc.com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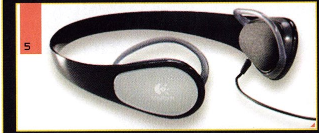
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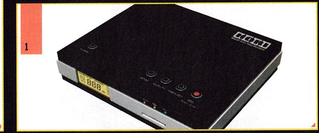
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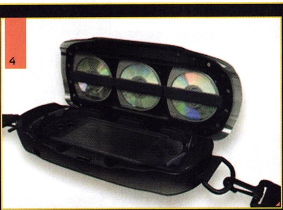
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HORI
SLIDE CASE
PORTABLE
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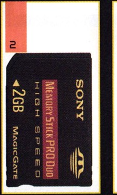
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Power Brick

THE COMMUTER

Where does the day go? Half of it is spent in the car, bus, or train getting to and from work. But thanks to your PSP, you don't have to die of boredom in the process.

1• MEMORY STICK PRO DUO VIDEO RECORDER

Plug this nerd-a-rific box into your home theater and it will optimize and record video directly onto a Memory Stick Duo, turning it into readable MPEG4 video files ready for viewing on your PSP. With a 1GB card, you can get anywhere from 150 minutes (320x240 at 30fps) to 1,070 minutes (116x112 at 15fps) of recording time.

$130
www.hori.jp/us

2• MEMORY STICK DUOS

All those shows you're recording have to go somewhere! Your first instinct is to buy into the brand name and shell out for a Sony Memory Stick Duo. Don't. All you're really paying for is the brand name.

$100 (SanDisk 1GB color Memory Stick Duo)
www.sandisk.com
$220 (Sony 2GB Memory Stick Pro Duo)
www.sonystyle.com

3• POWER BRICK

Think of this as the "in case of emergency, break glass" solution for power when you're on the road. The power brick takes about four hours to fully load up. With it, you can recharge your PSP twice. It's great when you've got miles between pit stops, but we really hate carrying around extra parts. There's a small length of wire you need to run from the brick to your PSP, and if you lose it, you're hosed. Still, if you've got a case or bag to hold everything together, this is worth looking into.

$20
www.pelicanacc.com

4• PLAYGEAR STREET AND PLAYGEAR POCKET

Is the PlayGear Street a PSP case or a billy club? You make the call. This hard case is hardcore—and big. The only reason to lug it around is if you want a couple games, memory sticks, and a PSP on your person at all times. It can (barely) fit into a backpack, but you can choose to use the big "look at me, I'm a huge nerd" sling strap. The slightly more sophisticated crowd that doesn't need everything at once will buy the PlayGear Pocket. You can even pluck out the top lining of the Pocket and insert your own customized faces. Search online for color inserts and add a little more flair to your PSP.

$30 (Street)
$20 (Pocket)
www.logitech.com

5• PLAYGEAR MOD HEADPHONES

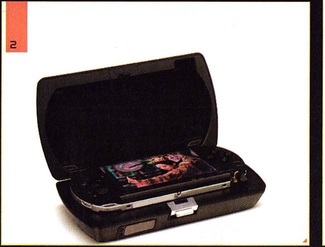
The oh-so-fashionable iPod-like headphones packed with the PSP are about as comfy as a meat thermometer in your cranium. You need something that works on the morning commute. The Mod headphones are ultralight and look stylish in that *Star Wars* Lobot kind of way by wrapping around the back of your head. For a $30 pair of headphones, they also happen to sound really good, with decent midrange and bass response.

$30
www.logitech.com

6• SLIDE CASE

That big open hole on the back of your UMD disc is just begging to be messed with. When you're hitting the road and want to take a couple extra games with you, you need these cases. These sturdy plastic shells can stand up to most beatings, shy of you accidentally stepping on them.

$3
www.hori.jp/us



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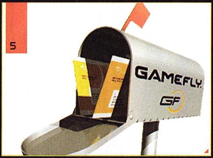

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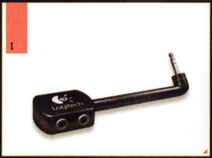

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THE FREQUENT FLYER

You travel a lot. Maybe your job takes you all over the world. Maybe you're looking for the one-armed man who killed your wife. Point is, you're putting on the miles and you've got nothing but time between destinations. So make sure you've got the right tools for your PSP.

1• PLAYGEAR SHARE

The concept of sharing isn't exactly foreign here, but it's a little tough having two people hovering near a PSP and both getting a good earful. Logitech built a stereo headphone Y-splitter for just such an occasion. Want to share your music with a buddy? Plug and play, friends. However, it might be harder to share movies since the small screen is tough for two sets of eyes to watch at the same time.

$10

www.logitech.com

2• NYKO CHARGER CASE

Here's a different approach: Protect your PSP in an aluminum case and charge it while it's stashed. It may be a little chunky (hint: it won't fit in your pocket and you'll need to remove the PSP to play), but the bonus is that the Nyko Charger Case can goose your PSP with an extra five hours of play time before you need to plug it back in. If you know the road calls and you won't be seeing an electrical outlet for long periods, a charger case is going to help. A lot.

$70

www.nyko.com

3• MAGNACASE

If you want to store your games neatly in a compact space, you need Nyko's MagnaCase. Looking like a large CD jewel case, it holds four UMDs. Magnets lock in discs while rubber strips protect that all-important hole on the back of every UMD.

$10

www.nyko.com

4• SHURE E4C EARPHONES

The really hardcore who enjoy plugging up their ears need to be Shure. These ear-isolating earphones work as well as noise-canceling cans but do it without batteries. These guys will quickly become loyal sidekicks. For $300, they'd better! Tune out the hum of planes, the wail of a crying baby, or the blathering of Bob the alpaca farmer from Modesto. Why do these guys cost so much? Shure makes top-flight gear, and these ear-isolating headphones also have an air-channel to provide impressive bass response (something you usually don't find in ear-isolating headphones).

$300

www.shure.com

5• GAMEFLY SUBSCRIPTION

Those who are hardcore enough can rip DVDs onto memory cards, but the other option for the lazy and/or rich is a Netflix-type service that lets you rent any of the hundreds of UMD movies available. Don't have enough games to keep you occupied? Consider stocking up on films for your next trip or try out new PSP game titles as well.

$22 a month

www.gamefly.com

6• TALKMAN SOFTWARE AND MICROPHONE

There's no need for frequent flyers' conversations to get lost in translation. While *Talkman* isn't quite a game, it is a whole lot more than just a translator. Plug in the USB microphone and talk. Simple as that. The program (which works in English, Chinese, and Japanese) can understand what you're saying and then repeat what you want in another language. The part that gets us really excited is that this microphone could add voice command to some games or maybe perform voice-to-text functions. Or, for those thinking way ahead, this could turn the PSP into a sort of cell phone.

$50 (in Japan)

www.playstation.com

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Rugby 2004	EA Sports	●●●	73
Rugby 2005	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Rumble Racing	EA Games	●●●●◖	45
Rumble Roses	Konami	●●●	88
Rune: Viking Warlord	Take-Two	●●◖	48
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	Tecmo	●●●●◖	64
Salt Lake 2002	Eidos	●●◖	55
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	Sega	●●●●	80
Samurai Warriors	Koei/EA	●●●●	81
Samurai Warriors: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●	88
Samurai Western	Atlus	●●●	94
Saturday Night Speedway	Atari	●●◖	81
Savage Skies	Bam	●●●	56
Scaler	Global Star	●●●●	88
Scooby-Doo! Mystery Mayhem	THQ	●●●	81
Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	**THQ**	●●●	**58**
The Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian	Universal	●●	62
SD Gundam Force: Showdown!	Bandai	●●●◖	88
Second Sight	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	LucasArts	●●●●	75
Seek and Destroy	Conspiracy	●●●◖	66
Sega Bass Fishing Duel	Sega	●●●	62
Sega Classics Collection	Sega	●●	90
Sega Soccer Slam	Sega Sports	●●	62
Sega Sports Tennis	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
Sega Superstars	Sega	●●●●	88
⚡Serious Sam: Next Encounter	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Seven Samurai 20XX	Sammy	●●	80
Shadow Hearts	Midway	●●●●	52
Shadow Hearts: Covenant	Midway	●●●●	86
Shadow of Destiny	Konami	●●●◖	43
Shadow of Rome	Capcom	●●●●	89
Shadow of the Colossus	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	97
Shadow Man: 2econd Coming	Acclaim	●●	57
Shaman King: Power of Spirit	Konami	●●◖	89
Shark Tale	Activision	●●◖	88
Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	Activision	●●◖	52
ShellShock: Nam '67	Eidos	●●	85
Shifters	3DO	●	58
Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga	Atlus	●●●●	92
Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga 2	Atlus	●●●●	98
Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne	Atlus	●●●●◖	86
Shining Tears	Sega	●●●	90
Shinobi	Sega	●●●◖	63
Showdown: Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●◖	83
Shox	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	63
Shrek 2	**Activision**	●●●◖	**82**
Shrek Super Party	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	64
Siren	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Silent Hill 2	**Konami**	●●●●◖	**50**
Silent Hill 3	Konami	●●●●◖	71
Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	●●●●◖	85
Silent Line: Armored Core	Agetec	●●●◖	70
Silent Scope	Konami	●●●	39
Silent Scope 2	Konami	●●●◖	49
Silent Scope 3	Konami	●●●◖	62
Silpheed: The Lost Planet	Working Designs	●●●◖	40
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●●	**72**
The Simpsons: Road Rage	**EA Games**	●●●	**52**
The Simpsons Skateboard ing	EA Games	●◖	64
The Sims	**EA Games**	●●●●	**65**
⚡The Sims: Bustin' Out	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**76**
Sitting Ducks	Hip Interactive	●●●	88
Sky Gunner	Atlus	●●●◖	58
Sky Odyssey	Activision	●●●	40
⚡S.L.A.I.: Steel Lancer Arena International	Konami	●●	98
Sled Storm	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	55
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**62**
Sly 2: Band of Thieves	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**86**
Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	98
Smash Cars	Metro3D	●●●◖	71
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament	Namco	●●●◖	56
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament 2	Namco	●●●●	82
Smuggler's Run	**Rockstar**	●●●●◖	**39**
Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory	Rockstar	●●●●◖	52
Sniper Elite	Namco	●●●◖	98
Soccer America: International Cup	Hot-B	●●	48
Soccer Mania	EA/Lego	●●●◖	59
⚡SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**60**
⚡SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**75**
Soldier of Fortune	Majesco	●●●	52
Sonic Heroes	Sega	●●	77
Sonic Mega Collection	Sega	●●●	88
Soul Calibur II	**Namco**	●●●●●	**72**
Soul Calibur III	**Namco**	●●●●●	**98**
Soul Reaver 2	Eidos	●●●	52
Space Channel 5 Special Edition	Sega	●●●◖	75
Space Race	Infogrames	●●◖	59
Spartan: Total Warrior	Midway	●●●●	98
Spawn Armageddon	Namco	●◖	76
Speed Kings	Acclaim	●●●●	70
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	THQ	●●●◖	75
Spider-Man	**Activision**	●●●●◖	**57**
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	84
Splashdown	Infogrames	●●●●	52
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	**THQ**	●●●●●	**72**
SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom	**THQ**	●●●●◖	**75**
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie	THQ	●●●●◖	87
Spy Fiction	Sammy	●●	85
SpyHunter	**Midway**	●●●●◖	**50**
SpyHunter 2	Midway	●●●	76
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●	**64**
Spyro: A Hero's Tail	Vivendi Universal	●●	87
⚡SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	Namco	●●●	64
SSX	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**38**
SSX Tricky	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**52**
⚡SSX 3	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**74**
Star Ocean: Till the End of Time	Square Enix	●●●●	84
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	TDK	●●	75
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Majesco	●●◖	53
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	●●●	65
Star Wars Battlefront	LucasArts	●●●●◖	86
Star Wars Bounty Hunter	**LucasArts**	●●●	**64**
Star Wars: Episode III ROTS	LucasArts	●●●	94
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter	LucasArts	●●●◖	56
Star Wars Racer Revenge	LucasArts	●●●●◖	55
Star Wars Starfighter	**LucasArts**	●●●●◖	**43**
Star Wars Super Bombad Racing	LucasArts	●●	45
Starsky & Hutch	Gotham Games	●●	74
State of Emergency	**Rockstar**	●●●	**55**
Stella Deus: The Gate of Eternity	Atlus	●●●●	93
Stitch: Experiment 626	Sony CEA	●●◖	59
Stolen	Hip Interactive	●●●	94
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●●	84
Street Fighter EX 3	Capcom	●●●◖	39
Street Hoops	**Activision**	●●●◖	**60**
Stretch Panic	Conspiracy	●●●◖	47
Strike Force Bowling	Crave	●◖	82
Stuntman	**Infogrames/Atari**	●●●	**59**
Sub Rebellion	Metro3D	●●●●	62
The Suffering	Midway	●●●	80
The Suffering: Ties That Bind	Midway	●●●●◖	98
Suikoden III	Konami	●●●	63
Suikoden IV	Konami	●●●	89
Summer Heat Beach Volleyball	Acclaim	●●●◖	72
Summoner	THQ	●●●	39
Summoner 2	THQ	●●●◖	62
Sunny Garcia Surfing	Ubisoft	●●●◖	51
Super Bust-A-Move	Acclaim	●●●	41
Super Bust-A-Move 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Super Monkey Ball Deluxe	Sega	●●●	92
Super Trucks Racing	XS Games	●◖	76
Supercar Street Challenge	Activision	●●◖	52
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	Atari	●●●◖	63
Surfing H30	Rockstar	●●	40
SWAT: Global Strike Team	Sierra	●●●	74

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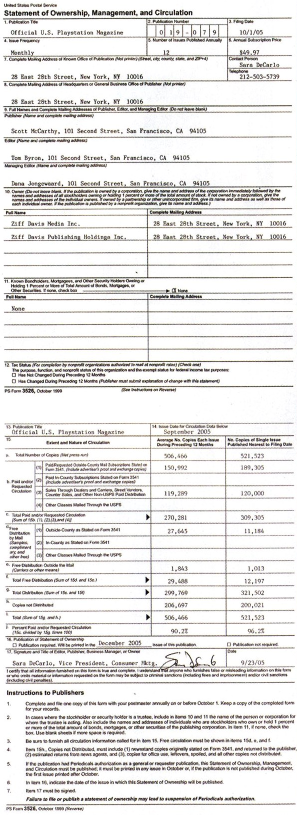

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b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation	(1)	Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541. *(Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)*	150,992	189,305
	(2)	Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 *(Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)*		
	(3)	Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	119,289	120,000
	(4)	Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS		
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation *[Sum of 15b. (1), (2),(3),and (4)]* ▶			270,281	309,305
d. Free Distribution by Mail *(Samples, compliment ary, and other free)*	(1)	Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	27,645	11,184
	(2)	In-County as Stated on Form 3541		
	(3)	Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS		
e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail *(Carriers or other means)*			1,843	1,013
f. Total Free Distribution *(Sum of 15d. and 15e.)* ▶			29,488	12,197
g. Total Distribution *(Sum of 15c. and 15f)* ▶			299,769	321,502
h. Copies not Distributed			206,697	200,021
i. Total *(Sum of 15g. and h.)* ▶			506,466	521,523
j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation *(15c. divided by 15g. times 100)*			90.2%	96.2%

16. Publication of Statement of Ownership
☐ Publication required. Will be printed in the December 2005 issue of this publication. ☐ Publication not required.

17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Sara DeCarlo, Vice President, Consumer Mktg.

Date: 9/23/05

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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3. Be sure to furnish all circulation information called for in item 15. Free circulation must be shown in items 15d, e, and f.
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5. If the publication had Periodicals authorization as a general or requester publication, this Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation must be published; it must be printed in any issue in October or, if the publication is not published during October, the first issue printed after October.
6. In item 16, indicate the date of the issue in which this Statement of Ownership will be published.
7. Item 17 must be signed.

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PS Form **3526**, October 1999 *(Reverse)*

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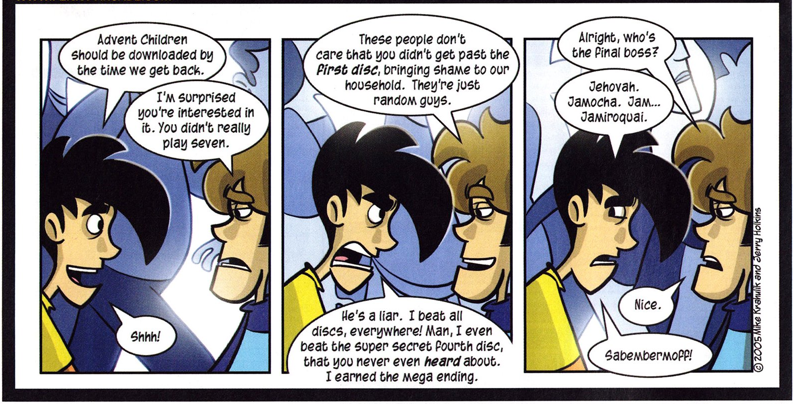
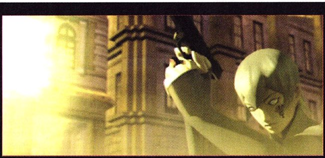

Advent Children should be downloaded by the time we get back.
I'm surprised you're interested in it. You didn't really play seven.
Shhh!
These people don't care that you didn't get past the *first disc*, bringing shame to our household. They're just random guys.
He's a liar. I beat all discs, everywhere! Man, I even beat the super secret fourth disc, that you never even **heard** about. I earned the mega ending.
Alright, who's the final boss?
Jehovah. Jamocha. Jam... Jamiroquai.
Nice.
Sabembermoff!
© 2005 Mike Krahulik and Jerry Holkins

READER REVIEWS

GAMING AT THE SPEED OF NIGHT



SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: NOCTURNE

WHAT YOU SAID

"I got *Nocturne* last year, played it for a day, and completely forgot about it. It was only two weeks ago that I picked it up again, and now I can't stop playing it. I really love this game! The story is dark and gritty, with all of the characters having their own unique personalities and vibes. The graphics are beautiful, and the cel-shaded environments look stunning. The battle system is standard turn-based, but it allows you to convert your enemies to your side. This lets you use the converted demons as party members, or you can fuse two of them together to create another, more powerful demon. The music is awesome, with some really cool organ and rock tracks. Too bad there's no voice acting, but the story is so good, you'll quickly get over that. Also, be warned—you're going to have to put about 70 hours into this game to finish it, but it's totally worth it because the ending is amazing. Overall, *Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne* is a must-have for any RPG enthusiast."

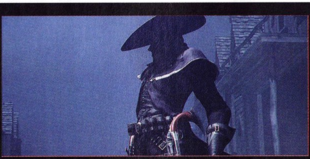
[●●●●●]

Shane Heslet

WHAT WE SAID

"In a genre that has had few, if any, notable releases since *Final Fantasy X-2* last year, it's wholly refreshing to see something so daring, original, and different come along and shake things up."

[●●●●◐]



DARKWATCH

WHAT YOU SAID

"Playing *Darkwatch* is like watching a really good B movie. Everything in the game is pretty good; unfortunately, there just isn't that much in the game. You start off in a train with a cowboy/outlaw dude turning into a vampire and getting on a pretty bitchin' demon horse to go out and fight zombies risen from the dead. About halfway through the game you suddenly realize that you've been shooting the same baddies (with a few exceptions) the whole time and that the game never really picks up. But like all good B movies, they took what they had to work with and made it pretty good. Just the fact that it takes two very different, yet very cool, subjects—the Wild West and vampires—should give it some originality points. Overall, they didn't go for too much, but what they did go for made it a decently entertaining first-person shooter."

[●●●●○]

Chad Merkley

WHAT WE SAID

"*Darkwatch* doesn't amount to much more than your run-of-the-mill first-person shooter."

[●●●○○]

Want to have your say about a recent game? Think you can do better than us? Send your review (don't forget the score!) to opm@ziffdavis.com with the subject "READER REVIEW."

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Swing Away Golf	EA Games	●●●	38
⚡Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Taiko: Drum Master	Namco	●●●●	87
Tak and the Power of Juju	**THQ**	●●●◖	**75**
Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	THQ	●●●◖	88
Tarzan: Untamed	Ubisoft	●●●◖	52
Taz: Wanted	Infogrames	●●●◖	60
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Konami	●●◖	75
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	●	86
Tekken 4	**Namco**	●●●◖	**61**
Tekken 5	Namco	●●●●	92
Tekken Tag Tournament	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**39**
Technic Beat	Mastiff	●●●	89
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows	Sega	●●	90
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Activision	●●●	67
The Terminator: Dawn of Fate	Atari	●●◖	63
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	●◖	77
Terminator 3: The Redemption	Atari	●●●◖	86
Test Drive	**Infogrames**	●●●◖	**58**
Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open	Infogrames	●●●	48
Test Drive: Eve of Destruction	Atari	●●●●	85
Tetris Worlds	THQ	●●	57
Theme Park Roller Coaster	EA Games	●●●●	41
The Thing	Universal	●●●	62
Thunderstrike: Operation Phoenix	Eidos	●◖	52
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	EA Sports	●●●	44
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	EA Sports	●●●●◖	63
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**73**
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	86
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06	EA Sports	●●●◖	98
Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas	Capcom	●●●◖	98
Time Crisis 2	Namco	●●●●	49
Time Crisis 3	Namco	●●●●◖	74
Time Crisis: Crisis Zone	Namco	●●●◖	86
TimeSplitters	**Eidos**	●●●●●	**39**
TimeSplitters 2	**Eidos**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡TimeSplitters: Future Perfect	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**91**
TOCA Race Driver 2	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3	Crave	●●	76
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	Crave	●●◖	45
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	**Ubisoft**	●●●◖	**65**
⚡Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	Ubisoft	●●●◖	78
⚡Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	●●●●	80
⚡Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Lockdown	Konami	●●●●◖	98
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	**Ubisoft**	●●●●◖	**68**
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	**Ubisoft**	●●●●●	**92**
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	**Ubisoft**	●●●●●	**82**
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	**Eidos**	●●	**72**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	**Activision**	●●●●●	**51**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	**Activision**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground	**Activision**	●●●●●	**76**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	●●●●◖	87
Top Angler	Xicat	●●●◖	57
Top Gear Dare Devil	Kemco	●●●◖	41
Top Gun: Combat Zones	Titus	●●●	50
Total Immersion Racing	Empire	●	66
Transformers	Atari	●●●◖	81
Transworld Surf	Infogrames	●●●◖	57
⚡Tribes: Aerial Assault	Sierra	●●●◖	62
Triple Play 2002	EA Sports	●●	55
Triple Play Baseball	EA Sports	●●	45
⚡Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari	●●	81
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	**Activision**	●●	**76**
Tsugunai: Atonement	Atlus	●●●	53
Turok: Evolution	Acclaim	●◖	62
Twisted Metal: Black	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**47**
⚡Twisted Metal: Black Online	Sony CEA	●●●●	61
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	**EA Games**	●●●	**62**
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 2: Bush Rescue	EA Games	●●●●	88
UEFA Euro 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	82
UFC Throwdown	Crave	●●●◖	58
UFC Sudden Impact	Crave	●●●◖	82
Under the Skin	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Unison	Tecmo	●●●◖	44
Unlimited Saga	Square Enix	●●	70
Unreal Tournament	Infogrames	●●◖	40
Urban Reign	Namco	●●●◖	97
The Urbz: Sims in the City	EA Games	●●●◖	88
V-Rally 3	Infogrames	●●●●◖	64
Vampire Night	Namco	●●◖	52
Van Helsing	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	82
Vexx	Acclaim	●●	67
Victorious Boxers	Empire	●●●◖	51
⚡Vietcong: Purple Haze	Global Star	●◖	88
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	●●●●◖	85
Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom	●●●●	88
Virtua Fighter 4	**Sega**	●●●●●	**55**
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	**Sega**	●●●●●	**72**
Virtua Quest	Sega	●●	89
Virtual on Marz	Sega	●●	76
Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	●●●●◖	70
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	Bam	●●●	74
War Jetz	3DO	●●◖	48
War of the Monsters	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**64**
⚡Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	THQ	●●◖	74
Warriors of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	44
Wave Rally	Eidos	●◖	53
Way of the Samurai	Bam	●●●◖	59
Way of the Samurai 2	Capcom	●●●	82
We Love Katamari	Namco	●●●●◖	98
Wheel of Fortune	Atari	●●◖	76
Whiplash	Eidos	●●●◖	76
Whirl Tour	Vivendi Universal	●●	63
Whiteout	Konami	●	65
Wild Arms 3	Sony CEA	●●●◖	62
Wild Wild Racing	Interplay	●●●	39
Winback	Koei	●●●●	43
Wipeout Fusion	Bam	●●●●◖	57
Wizardry: Tale of the Forsaken Land	Atlus	●●●	53
Woody Woodpecker: Buzz Buzzard Park	DreamCatcher	●●●	57
⚡World Championship Poker	Crave	●◖	90
⚡World Championship Pool 2004	Jaleco	●●●◖	76
World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	3DO	●●●	42
World of Outlaws: Sprint Cars	Infogrames	●●●●	55
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	67
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 6 Int'l	**Konami**	●●●●●	**67**
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 7 Int'l	**Konami**	●●●●●	**78**
⚡World Soccer: Winning Eleven 8 Int'l	Konami	●●●●◖	90
World Tour Soccer 2002	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
World Tour Soccer 2003	Sony CEA	●●●●	65
⚡World Tour Soccer 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	80
⚡World Tour Soccer 2006	Gathering	●●	91
Worms Forts: Under Siege	Sega	●●●	92
Wrath Unleashed	LucasArts	●◖	78
WRC: World Rally Championship	**Bam**	●●●●●	**57**
Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	Activision	●●	63
WTA Tour Tennis	Konami	●	57
WWE Crush Hour	THQ	●●◖	68
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	**THQ**	●●●◖	**76**
WWE SmackDown! Just Bring It	**THQ**	●●●◖	**52**
WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth	**THQ**	●●◖	**64**
⚡WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw	THQ	●●●◖	88
X Squad	EA Games	●●●◖	38
The X-Files: Resist or Serve	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	81
X-Men Legends	Activision	●●●●	87
X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision	●●●	64
X2: Wolverine's Revenge	Activision	●●●	69
Xenosaga Episode I: DWZM	**Namco**	●●●●	**66**
Xenosaga Episode II: JVGUB	Namco	●●●◖	90
XGRA: Extreme-G Racing Association	Acclaim	●●●●◖	74
⚡XIII	Ubisoft	●●●◖	75
Yanya Caballista: City Skater	Koei	●●●◖	49
Ys VI: The Art of Napishtim	Konami	●●●◖	90
Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelists of the Roses	**Konami**	●●◖	**67**
Yu-Gi-Oh! Capsule Monster Coliseum	Konami	●●●	88
Yu Yu Hakusho: Dark Tournament	Atari	●●◖	88
Zapper	Infogrames	●●◖	64
ZOE: Zone of the Enders	Konami	●●●●◖	44
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami	●●●●◖	68

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Issue 100
SONY

COMING NEXT MONTH

WHAT WILL JANUARY LOOK LIKE IN OPM WORLD?

IT'S OUR 100TH ISSUE!

ON THE COVER

THE ESSENTIAL 100

ALL THE PLAYSTATION GAMES YOU MUST PLAY BEFORE YOU DIE

ON THE DISC

- THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO
- WE LOVE KATAMARI
- FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE
- CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS
- SPARTAN
- THE SIMS 2
- SHREK SUPER SLAM
- CONFLICT: GLOBAL TERROR
- PAC-MAN WORLD 3
- THE INCREDIBLES: RISE OF THE UNDERMINER
- NHL 2006

A STAGGERING 11 PLAYABLES IN ALL!

REWIND

OPM THROUGH THE YEARS

THE SAGA CONTINUES

Next month's issue will be *OPM*'s 100th. Continuing with the theme of the last few months, we're taking a look at Issues #78 through #88. By the end of this series, the magazine looked pretty much the way it does today, both in design and staff. And many of the games covered are ones we're still talking about in this very issue.

PlayStation
FINAL FANTASY XI
EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW!

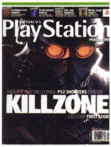
ISSUE #78: MARCH 2004

Cover story: *Final Fantasy XI*
Reviewed: *Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest* (4.5/5), *NFL Street* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Resident Evil Outbreak, Final Fantasy XII, Siren, Psi-Ops, Front Mission 4*
Underestimation of the month: A news item compares the merits of basing the next *GTA* in San Francisco versus Las Vegas. Who knew *both* cities would be featured?

PlayStation
SLY 2
KILLZONE
HITMAN CONTRACTS
DRIV3R
RAINBOW SIX 3

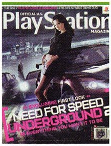
ISSUE #79: APRIL 2004

Cover story: *Sly 2: Band of Thieves*
Reviewed: *James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing* (4.5/5), *Nightshade* (3.5/5)
Previewed: *Killzone, Shellshock, Suikoden IV, Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*
Understatement of the month: "It was possibly one *Tomb Raider* too many." —former Core head Jeremy Heath-Smith, on *Angel of Darkness*



ISSUE #80: MAY 2004

Cover story: *Killzone*
Reviewed: *Rainbow Six 3* (4/5), *The Suffering* (3/5), *EyeToy: Groove* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Jak 3, Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal, Burnout 3: Takedown, Second Sight, Mercenaries, God of War*
Coolest feature: A series of exclusive EyeToy tech demos on the disc show off the surprising power of the camera.



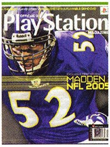
ISSUE #81: JUNE 2004

Cover story: *Need for Speed Underground 2*
Reviewed: *Resident Evil Outbreak* (3.5/5), *Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain* (3/5), *Siren* (3/5), *Hitman: Contracts* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Star Wars Battlefront, Enthusia, Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*
Most significant quote: "We can't dictate morals or ethics. People make up their own minds." —Patricia Vance, president, ESRB

PlayStation
CHAMPIONS RETURN TO ARMS

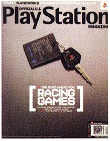
ISSUE #82: JULY 2004

Cover story: *Champions: Return to Arms*
Reviewed: *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* (5/5), *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* (4.5/5), *Red Dead Revolver* (4/5)
Previewed: *The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age, Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*
Most excruciating moment: Sending the final pages of the mag—the bit about Sony revealing the PSP—from the E3 show floor.



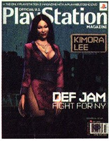
ISSUE #83: AUGUST 2004

Cover story: *Madden NFL 2005*
Reviewed: *DRIV3R* (3.5/5), *Madden NFL 2005* (4.5/5), *Karaoke Revolution Volume 2* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Devil May Cry 3, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, Area 51, Snowblind*
Cruelest quote: "They're a very vocal bunch, but they're just not the market anymore." —Steve Allison, chief marketing officer of Midway, on fanboys



ISSUE #84: SEPTEMBER 2004

Cover story: Racing Games
Reviewed: *Spider-Man 2* (3.5/5), *Catwoman* (1/5), *Star Ocean: Till the End of Time* (4/5)
Previewed: *X-Men Legends, The Bard's Tale, Metal Gear Acid*
Oddest quote: "I don't think people necessarily want something new. Known brands provide comfort and trust." —Yozo Sakagami, producer, *Death by Degrees*



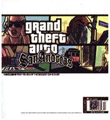
ISSUE #85: OCTOBER 2004

Cover story: *Def Jam: Fight for NY*
Reviewed: *Silent Hill 4: The Room* (4.5/5), *Burnout 3: Takedown* (5/5)
Previewed: *The Urbz, Destroy All Humans!*
Best quote ever: "Playing *Burnout 3* is like being in a knife fight with a monkey, only you're surrounded by a ring of fire, and the monkey has eight arms and can shoot lasers out of its eyes." —Giancarlo Varanini

PlayStation
METAL GEAR SOLID 3 SNAKE EATER

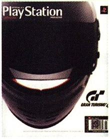
ISSUE #86: NOVEMBER 2004

Cover story: *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*
Reviewed: *Star Wars Battlefront* (4.5/5), *Sly 2: Band of Thieves* (5/5), *Katamari Damacy* (4.5/5), *Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Psychonauts, Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition, Alien Hominid*
Coolest fanboy moment: Playing *SOCOM II* with San Francisco Giants Jason Schmidt, Jason Christiansen, and AJ Pierzynski.



ISSUE #87: DECEMBER 2004

Cover story: *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*
Reviewed: *Jak 3* (4.5/5), *Killzone* (4/5), *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal* (5/5), *Need for Speed Underground 2* (5/5)
Previewed: *Shadow of the Colossus, Okami*
Most surprising gossip: "[When] the punch line is delivered [in a *Ratchet* cut-scene], all the Naughty Dogs' eyes start to roll." —Evan Wells, co-president, Naughty Dog



ISSUE #88: JANUARY 2005

Cover story: *Gran Turismo 4*
Reviewed: *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* (5/5), *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* (4/5)
Previewed: *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory, Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition, Area 51*
Most deceptively obvious quote: "The most important factor influencing game sales is the quality of the game."—John Geoghegan, VP of marketing, LucasArts

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